

**INVESTIGATING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE BETWEEN HISPANIC
PRE-KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS ENROLLED AND NOT ENROLLED
IN A STRUCTURED LITERACY PROGRAM IN
SELECTED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

A Dissertation

by

VERONICA F. GUERRA

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2008

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	John R. Hoyle Claudio Salinas
Committee Members,	Mario S. Torres Virginia Collier Barbara Greybeck
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ABSTRACT

Investigating Academic Performance Between Hispanic
Pre-kindergarten Students Enrolled and Not Enrolled in a Structured Literacy
Program in Selected Elementary Schools. (May 2008)

Veronica F. Guerra, B.S., Laredo State University;

M.S., Laredo State University

Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. John R. Hoyle
Dr. Claudio Salinas

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact on the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students after participating in a three year structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in a structured literacy program in selected elementary schools in the Laredo Independent School District in Texas. This study's objective was to determine if participation in a structured literacy program is beneficial. This study will provide information and direction for district educators and school leaders contemplating the benefits of a three year old pre-kindergarten program at all district campuses.

The researcher's hypothesis that young Hispanic children, given the opportunity to attend a three year old structured literacy program, will acquire literacy skills and perform academically above what is normally expected for this age group, is supported by literature and studies reviewed.

Key to the purpose of this study is the understanding that as children grow and develop in today's competitive society, literacy is important because it provides a

foundation for life-long learning. For that reason it becomes necessary to educate all children at an early age. Given that in today's volatile educational system, a comprehensive early childhood program has not been adopted much less one that focuses on pre-literacy and literacy skills; it is vital to examine the possible benefits. Currently, school districts and private institutions allow children to enter a kindergarten at different levels of literacy development and reading readiness; this is even truer for today's divergent and burgeoning Hispanic population. Based on research, students tend to fare better, both short-term and long-term when allowed to enter an early educational setting. While no specific program is identified as key to this success, it only stands to reason that one that is structured and that has a well defined curriculum would fare better.

Conclusions from this study provide data reflecting a need to provide an early pre-literacy program, improvement of teacher training, and greater parental involvement. It is this researcher's contention that schools benefit from further research regarding the implementation of like programs in other geographic regions and with other participants.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my Lord Jesus Christ. Without his blessings and guidance, I could not have accomplished this task. My faith and his providence have provided me with the inspiration to continue. It is with great pride that I dedicate the completion of my dissertation to my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ who gave me the strength, guidance and health to accomplish the entire doctoral program.

This dedication also goes to my patron, la Virgen de Guadalupe who gave me multiple signs of confirmation to overcome existing barriers. These acts of confirmation increased my faith tremendously and gave me the courage to continue with optimism and “ganas.”

This study is also dedicated to my father, Mr. Francisco Fanelle, and my late mother, Magdalena Buitron Fanelle, who have always been my pillars—my strength. Our family is extremely close and we share our challenges, worries, and happiness with each other. When we need a shoulder to cry on, they are always there. God has truly blessed our family and we have always placed our Lord first in our lives.

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Certainly writing a dissertation is not a solo act, but an ensemble effort.

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The whole process was a learning experience for me. With that I would like to begin by acknowledging a wonderful man, my husband, Manuel Guerra. Since the beginning, my dear husband Manuel Guerra provided me with his unselfish support and always had confidence in me that I would be able to accomplish my goal of obtaining my doctoral degree. For your patience, encouragement, trust, kindness, and most especially for your true love, I thank you.

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I also would like to offer the most heartfelt thanks to my dearest late mother-in-law, Elvira Arechiga Guerra, who was elated when she heard that I wanted to pursue the doctoral program. She was so supportive and proud. She even told my husband that he must support me with my goals and could not wait to call me Dr. Veronica F. Guerra; I like how that sounds. I only regret that she did not live long enough to see it happen. Still, I can visualize her and my dearest mother clapping for me when I walk the line.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The present necessity, importance and benefit of early education are well established. For the generation known as the “Baby Boomers,” those individuals born after World War II and before the 1970s, a high demand for child care services and preschool education developed. In the era of the 1960s, the public examined education in general and particularly focused on childhood care to address many of the educational ills of society. It was during President Lyndon B. Johnson’s war on poverty that the federally funded Head Start and child care programs were founded and funded to address learning and intellectual development (Fuller & Strath, 2001). Head Start offered a multitude of health and social services where parents played an important role in the process. Through Head Start, at-risk children were exposed to pre-requisite skills prior to entering the public school system with the intent of achieving greater success (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). A major student group that was impacted by these efforts is America’s Hispanic community (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007).

Research indicates that children who enter school at the Kindergarten level are not ready to learn unless there is a strong foundation of social, emotional, literacy and cognitive experiences provided by family, childcare services, and Head Start programs (Lee & Burkham, 2002). Lee and Burkham (2002) further indicated that approximately

The style and format for this dissertation follow that of *The Journal of Educational Research*.

one-third of one million children would not be ready for Kindergarten in the year 2000 due to lacking pre-literacy skills crucial to school success. Children who do not have the pre-requisite skills before starting first grade will be developmentally deficient (Bernard, 1991). Some of the drawbacks can be attributed to a lack of exposure to books, picture books, and parental involvement (Bernard, 1991). On the average, middle class children enter first grade with 1000 to 1700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading in comparison to low income children who enter first grade with an average of only twenty five hours (Adams, 1990). For students whose culture limits their exposure to purely academic literacy opportunities the impact is even greater (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007).

Due to their limited experiences, children who are victims of a culture of poverty have a larger achievement gap to close than children who did not come from poverty. As a consequence, they experience language limitations, health ailments, social and emotional problems which hinder their learning (Shonkoff & Philips, 2002; Thompson, 2001). There are far too many preschool children in the United States who are destined to school failure because they lack some of the basic survival elements and endure hardships such as living in poverty, neglect, illness, handicapping conditions, and a lack of parent protection, supervision, and nurturing (Bernard, 1991).

Children who live in low income neighborhoods also have a propensity to develop emotional and social problems which lead to greater disciplinary problems (Hoagwood, 2003). Data also confirms that families living in poverty and whose children have limited developmental experiences have IQ scores 9.1 points below those children who had no poverty experiences (McGill-Franzen, Lanford & Adams, 2002). Children of three or four years of age, living in poverty, are more likely to experience a

deficiency of reading skills and therefore are encouraged to enroll in early childhood education programs (McGill-Franzen et al., 2002).

Regarding brain development and learning, data confirms that the early years in a child's life are extremely important (Caldwell, 1991). Social, academic, and emotional developments are established during the first four years of a child's life (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Regarding intellectual development, the early years of a child's life are even more critical than at any other time (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). A child's first three years of life are a time when they learn at an exponential level and at rapid pace (Starr, 2002). In an attempt to make sense of their world they absorb information quickly and usually by the age of three have a vocabulary of at least one thousand words (Starr, 2002). The benefits of a preschool education, according to studies by Barnett (2002), recognize that in the areas of language development and pre-literacy skills gains can be made. For Hispanic students who must contend with not only mastering their own native language, but also are learning to contend with a second foreign language; the situation is daunting. A sound foundational program can help to eliminate barriers to these language skills and place children on the right path (Gutierrez & Stone, 1997).

A key component that has been examined and now taken into account regarding children and pre-literacy skills is brain development (Wiechel, 2003). Pre-literacy skills and foundations for learning language, problem solving, and social skills have benefitted from advances in the neuroscience along with a greater awareness to children's learning and intellectual growth (Wiechel, 2003). Good nutrition during the first 24 months of life is essential for brain growth and development (Clark-Erickson, 2006).

One of the clear goals of the federal Head Start program has been to address school readiness (Love, Kisker, Ross, Schochet, Brooks-Gunn & Paulsell, 2002). The Head Start program has always included services that address the whole child (e.g., dental, medical, nutritional, social services, and parental training sessions) (Love et al., 2002). There is a substantial difference in the lives of children and parents who participate and utilize these services (Love et al., 2002). Head Start improves vocabulary, math, and social skills. With the reauthorization of Head Start in 1994, Early Head Start was developed. In January 2001, a national evaluation indicated that Head Start participants performed significantly better on cognitive, social-emotional development and language (Love et al., 2002).

There are numerous studies that replicate the positive findings found in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The longitudinal studies such as the Perry Preschool Project and the Carolina Abecedarian Project demonstrate the long-term effectiveness of early preschool programs for at-risk children (Currie, 2001). The Abecedarian program involved 112 children of African-American descent born between 1972 and 1977 and whose family conditions were high risk such as, poverty, minimal parental schooling, welfare participants, parental intelligence, and parental employment. This project was utilized to determine risk for cognitive development (Ramey & Campbell, 1984). Studies such as these and further examination of student populations will help to alleviate and eliminate gaps in the educational system that are derived from cultural and societal stratification (McDermott, 1987)

The Abecedarian program had an emphasis in language development but addressed the other developmental domains such as mathematics and reading. Data

indicated substantial gains in intellectual development and achievement gains for children in the program. The IQ scores of the children in the program were significantly higher on achievement tests in mathematics and readings (Campbell & Ramey, 1995). At age 15, children who had participated in the project continued to show the positive effects of the program especially on reading and mathematics scores which remained significant (Campbell & Ramey, 1995). At age 21, these children had higher rates of four-year college or university enrollment 36 percent vs. 14 percent, and had completed more years of education 12.2 percent vs. 11.6 percent (Campbell & Ramey, 1995). According to Campbell and Ramey (1995), the children who participated in the experimental group were provided with early interventions which increased their success rate by reflecting a lower number of retentions and fewer special education placements. These results indicated the effectiveness of the preschool program over a long term period of time as there was fewer teenaged parenthood 26 percent vs. 45 percent among the children in the program (Campbell & Ramey, 1995). The Abecedarian program contributed to the increase of intellectual development and achievement of children by substantiating the credibility of the Head Start program (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello & Sparling, 2002).

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project utilized a sample of 123 African American students who came from poverty stricken homes. These 3- and four-year olds were divided into a control and experimental group. The control group received no intervention whereas the experimental group was exposed to a high quality preschool program with an emphasis on language, literacy, mathematics, social relations, and parent/teacher interaction with monitored home visits. Teachers received appropriate

training in the curriculum and in supervision. The teacher-pupil ratio was set at 6 students per teacher (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993).

The results from participation in the High/Scope Perry Project were significant: 71 percent graduated from high school compared to 54 percent from the control group; 59 percent received welfare assistance compared to 80 percent from the control group; 57 percent of preschool participants had out of wedlock babies compared to 83 percent from the control group (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993).

This data reflected positive substantial gains regarding graduation rate, the lowering of welfare recipients, and the lowering of out of wedlock babies. These results were also a due to the frequent weekly teacher-parent contact meetings (Landry, 2005).

With respect to the Head start program, although the general consensus may be that the program is beneficial Haskins (2004) put forth the premise that there exists no solid proof that in the long run, early intervention is successful. Haskins stipulates that by the second and/or third grade student achievement evens out. Haskins (2004) sites the General Accounting Office's screening of numerous studies indicated that many of the studies although somewhat noteworthy, contained some inconsistencies or failings.

Today's society faces numerous difficult challenges in understanding the vital importance of how the early years of children's lives affect their health, social development and cognitive development. After examining research on the impact of early childhood development, Ontario's Early Years Study has made several recommendations (Mustard, McCain & Bertrand, 2000). According to Mustard et al. (2000) in their examination of the Ontario Study, they found a correlation between the interaction of children and parents and its important role in the development of the brain.

Secondly, the study urged the creation of parent centers which provided accessibility to all parents and children to educational resources. Third the study acknowledged that garnering governmental, private, school board, and community support is a challenge, but recognized that a strong advocacy for early childhood development should exist within the community and amongst all stakeholders. A fourth element that the Early Study recognized was the establishment of policies to lend access of facilities to families and their children on evenings and weekends. A key finding in Mustard et al.'s (2000) examination of the study revealed that an appropriate early education program is one that provides prescriptive practices that will meet the distinctive needs of students.

Current data and recent studies have proven the validity of a sound pre-kindergarten program, especially with respects to the development of early literacy skills; this data however is incomplete. Although many of these studies address the success of these programs, they do not examine critical areas that may or may not impact Hispanic students. These critical areas are centered on not only language acquisition skills, but also pre-literacy skills. Given that a large percentage of Texas' student population is of a Hispanic background and that will continue to grow, it is essential to examine this demographic group. It is also vital to examine the societal and/or cultural factors in the Hispanic community that are part of the educational process (Lopez, 2001). Given the nature of today's accountability driven educational environment, the need to prove that early childhood programs are not only successful but cost effective in the Hispanic community is vital.

Statement of the Problem

Research has validated the need for preschool education which produces social, emotional, and academic development along with fewer grade retentions, dropouts, and special education placements. Increasingly, studies reflect more children not growing up in stable; nurturing households. This is especially true of Hispanic students (Lopez, 2001). In the past decade, studies have shown that a high quality early education program not only builds a strong educational foundation focusing on academic success, but also contributes to extraneous benefits such as the prevention of teen pregnancy, drug abuse, teenage behavioral problems, and crime activity (Barnett, 1996; Barnett & Camilli, 2002; Jacobson, 2001; Schweinhart, 1994).

Preschool education, according to the literature reviews consisting of manual, internet and periodical searches, reveal a significant need for additional study on the benefits of early education to improve student learning not only of children of poverty, but of all children (Barnett, 1996; Masse & Barnett, 2002). There is a pressing urgency to lobby federal government and state legislatures to augment their funding commitment to expand universal early childhood education providing a high quality preschool program with access to all students (American Federation of Teachers, 2003).

In addition, studies indicate that by attending a high quality early education program, students are better prepared for school (Rhode Island Kids Count, 2005). Students entering Kindergarten without the necessary pre-literacy skills crucial to school success are frequently at risk of academic failure (Landry, 2005). Students performing poorly or dropping out of school are evidence that positive change is needed in

education (Fullan, 2001). For Hispanic students, this is a more urgent matter based on the fact that they have greater barriers to overcome (Gutierrez & Stone, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students after participating in a three year structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in a structured literacy program in selected elementary schools in the Laredo Independent School District in Texas. This study will determine if participation in a structured literacy program is beneficial. This study will provide information and direction for district educators and school leaders contemplating the benefits of a three-year old pre-kindergarten program at all district campuses.

Research Questions

Given the identified needs and the stated challenges, two questions will guide this quantitative research study.

1. What are the differences in academic performance between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students in a structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in the structured literacy program in selected elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District?

2. What is the relationship between daily attendance rates and the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students enrolled in a structured program?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential contribution to the enhancement of the structured literacy program regarding an early education program for Hispanic students. The study will contribute to the literature and offer insight to teacher and school leadership. This comparative study will provide a more complete understanding of the differences in academic performance between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students in a structured literacy program compared to academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not participating in the structured literacy program in selected Laredo Independent School District schools.

As children grow and develop in today's competitive society, it becomes necessary to educate all children at an early age. Children enter pre-kindergarten at different levels of literacy development and reading readiness skills; this is even truer for today's divergent and burgeoning Hispanic population. Research currently addresses Anglo and African American students, while research on Hispanic students is lacking. In order to avoid the high first grade level retention that presently exists for Hispanic students, it is essential to provide research on this demographic group regarding Early Childhood Programs.

This research will provide the awareness and significance of initiating a specific educational program for three-year old Hispanic children in order to accomplish short

and long term results. It is essential for the nation as a whole, as well as parents to recognize the importance of investing in a high quality structured literacy pre-kindergarten program that will contribute to the child's overall cognitive, social, and emotional development. Early intervention programs may be the answer to many of our country's present dilemmas.

Operational Definitions

Many of the terms to be used throughout the study hold multiple meanings. To promote clarity, word meanings within the present investigation are noted below.

Academic Achievement/Performance—Improvement corresponding to academic subjects (e.g., Math, Science, Social Studies, English Oral Language and Spanish Oral Language).

At-Risk Student— A student who faces school failure or has the potential to leave school early due to low educational achievement (Taite, 1990).

Child Care—Care that takes place in the home of a child care provider (Kagan & Rigby, 2003).

Control Group—The group of students who did not participate in the structured literacy program from 13 Laredo Independent School District elementary campuses: Bruni Elementary, Buenos Aires Elementary, Daiches Elementary, Farias Elementary, Heights Elementary, Tarver Elementary, Leyendecker Elementary, MacDonell Elementary, Milton Elementary, Ryan Elementary, Santa Maria Elementary, Santo Nino Elementary, and Dovalina Elementary.

Early Intervention Programs—Educational programs that provide enriched activities and experiences for preschool children as a means of expanding their social, emotional, and intellectual development (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).

Experimental Group—The three-year old students who participated in the structured literacy program at Alma Pierce Elementary, D. D. Hachar Elementary, J. A. Kawas Elementary, H. Ligarde Elementary, J. C. Martin Elementary, Sanchez-Ochoa Elementary and H. B. Zachry Elementary from Laredo Independent School District.

Non-Structured Program – an absence of a structured pre-kindergarten program for students who lack the opportunity to receive both cognitive and developmental pre-literacy skills but who later attend a kindergarten program at Laredo Independent School District.

Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)—encompasses all data requested and received by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) about public education, including student demographic and academic performance, personnel, financial, and organizational information (TEA, 2006a).

Pre- LAS – A language assessment the Pre-LAS is a test designed to measure young children's expressive and receptive abilities in three linguistic components of oral language: morphology, syntax, and semantics. The Scoring and Interpretation regarding a student's responses provides guidelines for identifying appropriate placement in three categories: Non-English Speakers, Limited English Speakers, and Fluent (Proficient) English Speakers.

Pre-kindergarten Students—three- and four-year old children enrolled in a State funded preschool programs (Kagan & Rigby, 2003).

Pre-school Program—Programs for three- and four-year old children, regardless of funding stream (Kagan & Rigby, 2003).

Selected Elementary Schools—Identifies seven campuses who participated in a three-year old structured literacy program: Alma Pierce, D. D. Hachar, J. A. Kawas, H. Ligarde, J. C. Martin, Sanchez-Ochoa and H. B. Zachry from the Laredo Independent School District. The study consists of the three-year olds who participated in one of the seven schools for the purpose of comparative and performance analysis purposes.

Structured Literacy Program—a structured pre-kindergarten program in the Laredo Independent School District which focuses on both cognitive and developmental pre-literacy skills.

Tejas Lee—Tejas Lee is an assessment instrument that measures student reading skills and comprehension development in Spanish for students in Kindergarten, First Grade, and Second Grade to help teachers plan and deliver targeted instruction. This instrument fulfills the early reading assessment requirements established by federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and Texas Education Code 28.006 (TEA, 2005).

Methodology

This study will determine if Hispanic student participation in a structured literacy program is beneficial and if there is a difference in student performance among both groups of students. Due to the nature of the stated problem and the identified population, a quantitative research method will be used to acquire data.

Population

The population for this study will include an experimental group of seven elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District in Texas. From a total population of 140 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten during the 2003-2004 school years, a randomly selected sample size of 104 students will be drawn. The sample size will be determined using the formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The control group will consist of a sample size of 104 pre-kindergarten students. Of the fourteen potential school campuses, seven will be selected that most closely approximate to the demographic characteristics of the experimental school campuses and who did not participate in a structured literacy program. The variables that will select the students from the seven campuses will be socio-economic based on free and reduced lunch, bilingual based on the Pre-Las English proficiency assessment and ethnicity. This study will determine the three year longitudinal effect of the experimental group at the completion of their kindergarten school year in May, 2006. Students in the experimental group will be required to be enrolled continuously and consecutively in a pre-kindergarten program from 2003 to 2006.

The experimental group participating in the evaluative study met the following criteria:

1. Students were enrolled in the 2003-2004 pre-kindergarten, structured literacy programs in the district.

2. Students were consecutively and continuously enrolled as a three-year old pre-kindergarten student, as a four-year old pre-kindergarten student, and as a five year old kindergarten student.

This study will compare both groups of students in terms of academic performance.

Regarding a description of both the experimental and control groups, a demographic comparison of the sample reflects almost identical distinctions. For the experimental group which was comprised of Alma Pierce Elementary, D. D. Hachar Elementary, J. A. Kawas Elementary, H. Ligarde Elementary, J. C. Martin Elementary, Sanchez-Ochoa Elementary, and H. B. Zachry Elementary descriptors were almost identical. For these students who comprised an average of 14% of the campus population, students were about 100% Hispanic, 98% economically disadvantaged, 88% limited English proficient, 94% at-risk, and had a mobility rate of about 21% (TEA, 2006b). For the control group comprised of students from A. Bruni Elementary, Buenos Aires Elementary, L. Daiches Elementary, F. Farias Elementary, Heights Elementary, K. Tarver Elementary, J. Leyendecker Elementary, C. MacDonell Elementary, C. Milton Elementary, M. Ryan Elementary, Santa Maria Elementary, Santo Nino Elementary, and A. Dovalina Elementary campuses. For these students who comprised an average of 14% of the campus population, students were about 100% Hispanic, 98% economically disadvantaged, 93% limited English proficient, 94% at-risk, and had a mobility rate of about 21% (TEA, 2006b).

Instrumentation

The study will be quantitative in nature and variables that will be used in the study are as follows: kindergarten grades in English/Spanish Oral Language, social studies, science, math, pre-reading skills based on the 2006 end of year Texas Primary Reading Inventory/Tejas Lee and the 2005-2006 attendance days marked with the number of days present for instruction (TEA, 2006b). The TPRI/Tejas Lee end of the year results 2005-2006 will be used as a post test measure of the child's knowledge in the proficiency of reading. These skills will include reading comprehension, phonological awareness, and graphophonemic development. The results will also identify if the child is developed or still developing in the area of reading. This assessment is individually administered to kindergarten students at five years of age.

Tejas Lee

Based on state compliance issues, the Tejas Lee or *El Inventario de Lectura en Español de Tejas* was developed to provide an additional early Spanish reading assessment instrument (TEA, 2005, p. 6). The Tejas Lee is a Spanish scientific research based reading instrument which is equivalent to the English version of Texas Primary Reading Inventory. Both are diagnostic instruments that identify the academic needs of individual students including reading comprehension. The results of these instruments assist the teachers to properly plan individual or group reading instruction with the necessary interventions to prevent reading difficulties (TEA, 2005).

If the Tejas Lee data reveals that a student needs intensive, targeted instruction in a specific area, placement in the school's accelerated reading instruction funded program is required. Parents will be notified of the student's particular needs and the plans to meet these needs.

The Tejas Lee is an assessment instrument that measures student reading skills and comprehension development in Spanish to help teachers plan and deliver targeted instruction.

The purposes of the Tejas Lee are:

- To provide an additional early Spanish reading instrument which districts may select and administer to fulfill the requirements of the Texas Education Code Section 28.006;
- To detect early reading difficulties or risk for reading difficulties in Spanish or English reading at an early level, in grades K-2; and
- To provide a summary of reading skills and comprehension, which teachers utilize in their daily instruction.

Many stakeholders were responsible for providing input in creating the original *Tejas Lee*. Both the original inventory and the Spanish passages along with the comprehension questions were written by educators. While the former was written by a team of bilingual education teachers, renowned experts in Spanish Literacy developed the latter. A different group of individuals were responsible for writing the test administration instructions (TEA, 2005).

All groups were under the guidance of two offices funded by the Texas Education Agency. These groups were the Bilingual Education Office from the University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA).

The Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics (TIMES) at the University of Houston is currently under contract with the Texas Education Agency to examine the reliability and validity of the *Tejas Lee* and to further develop and modify the instrument (TEA, 2005).

Through a Texas Legislature mandate, students from the Kindergarten through the second grade are required to take a diagnostic inventory. Each child is provided with the appropriate reading instruction as prescribed by the assessment results that the inventory provides for the teacher. This should ensure that the diagnostic reading assessment results that the inventory provides to the teacher. This should ensure that diagnostic reading assessments, such as *Tejas Lee*, provide students with the appropriate assistance in learning so that all students can read as soon as possible and so that many reading skills that need developing not be overlooked. All of this achieved when a teacher plans accordingly with the results that have been generated from the test results (TEA, 2005).

Procedure

The study was conducted in the spring of 2007. Permission was sought from the President of the Board of Trustees to collect student data from selected elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District. A letter addressed to the President of the Board of Trustees assured subject confidentiality, as well as a detailed explanation of the

researcher's intent. Student identification was concealed through the assignment of numbers instead of their names during data collection, analysis and on the student test results. Upon receiving permission to collect student data, the researcher sent notification of this approval along with a copy of the Board President's letter to each campus principal and the director of early childhood. As the researcher, a PEIMS report was requested for students that participated for the three consecutive school years within a week's timeframe identifying the students who participated in the pre-kindergarten structured literacy program as three-year olds. In addition, 104 students were identified from the seven non-participating campuses and were randomly selected using the assignment of numbers for students on the PEIMS list. Principals were provided a list of the randomly selected students and copies of student records identifying the TPRI/Tejas Lee results, grades and attendance for the 2005-2006 school year were requested within a ten day timeframe. Student records of the control group followed the same procedure in the collection of student data.

Data Analysis

TPRI/Tejas Lee test results for the five year old kindergarten students were used to gather preliminary data on pre-kindergarten readiness skills on the 2003-2004 student groups. The one group post test design were used with three-year old students who participated in the structured literacy program and three-year old students who did not participate in the structured literacy program to determine effects on student performance. The student data analyses were performed on the collected data by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), an electronic driven statistical

software program. The data was analyzed through the use of appropriate techniques as identified by (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). Multiple displays such as tables and charts were used to present findings. The results were reported using descriptive data including mean, frequency, and percentages utilizing the TPRI/Tejas Lee assessment, academic grades, and attendance. Participation criteria for students who were enrolled in the pre-kindergarten program consisted of free/reduced lunch (income), and/or limited English proficient and/or identification as being homeless. In this study the demographic variables, used to disaggregate the data, are program placement, the student's free/reduced lunch status (a measure of socioeconomic status); the student's limited English proficiency (based on LEP status) and/or homeless status (also a measure of socioeconomic status). The dependent variables for Research Question #1 are Pre-reading skills (Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills) and report grades six content area scores (Reading, Spanish Oral Language, English Oral Language, Math, Science, and Social Studies). Each of the dependent variables related to Research Question #1 will have data reported using frequencies and percentages. The dependent variable for Research Question #2 is level of attendance. Means and standard deviations will be used to report attendance data. A chi-square analysis will be used to analyze the academic achievement (Research Question #1) of the experimental group of students who participated in a structured literacy program versus the control group of students who did not participate in the structured literacy program. An independent samples t-test will be used to analyze the attendance measure (Research Question #2) between the two groups.

Limitations

A limitation, as described by Gay and Airasian (2000), is an aspect of research which the research has no control and/or which may affect the study or the results. As with any study, whether qualitative or quantitative in nature this study may have the following limitations:

1. The study is limited to the selected number of elementary campuses in Laredo Independent School District.
2. This study is limited to the information acquired from the literature review and survey instruments.

Assumptions

Assumptions are an element of the quantitative research process. Gay and Airasian (2000) state that an assumption is “any important fact presumed to be true but not actually verified” (p. 108). This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. The researcher was impartial in collecting and analyzing the data.
2. Interpretation of the data collected accurately reflected the intent of the respondent.
3. The researcher understood the scope of the study, the language of the instrument, was competent in self-reporting, and responded objectively and honestly.
4. The methodology proposed and described here offered the most logical and appropriate design for this particular study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I provides an introduction, context of the study, statement of the research problem and the significance of the study. The chapter concludes by stating the limitations and assumptions of the study, as well as clarifying the operational terms to be used in the study. Chapter II provides a brief history of the development of early intervention programs and a review of the literature pertaining to literacy and the pre-kindergarten program. Chapter III explains the research methodology and design proposed to answer the research questions. Chapter IV describes the results of the analyses and Chapter V provides a summary and conclusions drawn from the results, a discussion of the findings and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The present study focused on the impact of academic performance of pre-kindergarten students after participating in a three year structured literacy program. The researcher formed a hypothesis that young Hispanic children, given the opportunity to attend a three-year old structured literacy program, acquire literacy skills and perform academically above those students who do not participate in said program. While some educators may be satisfied with beginning a child's educational career at Kindergarten, existing research implies that it may be more beneficial to educate provide children with a program in a developmentally appropriate manner beginning at a much earlier age.

According to Bowman, Donovan and Burns (2000):

While no single curriculum or pedagogical approach can be identified as best, children who attend well-planned, high quality early childhood programs in which curriculum aims are specified and integrated across domains tend to learn more and are better prepared to master complex demands of formal schooling. (p. 6)

Current assessment instrument utilized to examine the acquisition and development of pre-literacy skills are more and more utilized with younger students. Given the fact that this trend provides educators with an opportunity to provide a more prescriptive and structured literacy program should prove authentic. A crucial component of this structured program is not only the use of timely and accurate data, but also the utilization of highly qualified and competent staff. With regard to this study and current practices, prior and current research supports the need for further research. It is

vital to the examination of pre-kindergarten students who participate in a structured pre-literacy program to review literature on policy and investment in pre-kindergarten programs, theories of early intervention, literacy building, a perspective of early childhood programs, pre-kindergarten and socio-economic factors, pre-kindergarten and barriers for Hispanic children, developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood programs, and language acquisition.

Policy and Investment in Pre-kindergarten Programs

There is an increasing urgency for high-quality pre-kindergarten education programs among our top policy legislators and governors in the United States. Research confirms that the early years in a child's life are the most important to brain and cognitive development. Policymakers are favoring the financial investment in pre-kindergarten programs especially if the outcome of the data is an indication of student success for those who participated in an early educational program. The achievement gap for minorities' is narrowed and society benefits greatly when students participate in such programs (Garces, Thomas & Currie, 2000).

In these three studies, Schweinhart, Barnes and Weikart's 1993 study of the significant benefits; High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27, Investing in our Children: What We Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions, (Karoly, Greenwood, Everingham, Hoube, Kilbourn, Rydell, Sanders & Chieca, 1998), and "Extended Early Childhood Intervention and School Achievement: Age Thirteen Findings from the Chicago Longitudinal Study" (Reynolds & Temple, 1998), have all corroborated with the premise that early childhood programs

are beneficial. These studies conducted in the 1990's, are somewhat dated. Due to the new accountability mandates further research would be beneficial.

Charles Kolb (2007) in his examination of the need to invest in a quality pre-kindergarten program clearly elaborated on how policymakers and the business sector now recognize that too many individuals enter the workforce without the ability to function even at a most basic level. Surprisingly, as Temple, Reynolds and Miedel (2000) point out that students who participate in good-quality early childhood programs positively impacts high school completion and/or dropout rates. It stands to reason that a pre-kindergarten program will provide a solid developmental foundation for children. Based on current accountability mandates, it would be prudent to specifically examine how early intervention programs impacts and/or dictates existing patterns regarding high school completion and other predictors of socio-economic status and successes in adulthood. As with all educational endeavors, legislators and politicians have always understood that finances are going to be a key component to this or any other educational venture. Diana Stone (2006) in her examination of finances and funding of quality early childhood programs offered that although some interest has been evident there is a need for a greater investment. Policymakers and educators must share the same vision by educating the young children in a literacy pre-kinder program at an earlier age to ensure a successful life.

Theories of Early Intervention

If society is going to partake in this educational venture, it is clearly important to examine the various approaches that may be available and the numerous benefits in

providing high quality pre-kindergarten programs. Research conducted by Susanna Loeb at Stanford University and at the University of California sampled 14,000 kindergarteners from the National Center for Education and found cognitive gains in children who took part in a structured developmental program (Lee, Loeb & Lubeck, 1998). And while Anglo and African American students benefited from pre-kindergarten schooling, the Hispanic population had greater successes by doubling pre-reading skills as well as language development (Jacobson, 2005). Linda Jacobson (2005, p. 1) in her work on early childhood education voiced a very powerful message when quoting Libby Dogget a Washington state advocate regarding pre-kindergarten education; “Quality pre-k can no longer be considered a luxury for wealthy families or a targeted program for low-income families,” she said. “America should provide it for all children” (Jacobson, 2005, p.1).

Developmentally speaking, especially in regards to cognitive and pre-literacy skills, an early intervention program or pre-kindergarten program can provide children with a school readiness vehicle that can insure future success. Early practitioners of academia geared towards providing schooling for children at an early age structured their efforts along the lines of a more formal curriculum (Ronda, 1999). Clearly the practices of those early childhood pioneers were a reflection of their times; a time where children were viewed more as little adults rather than developing individuals with personal and unique needs and learning styles. Current theory, whether cognitive developmental, social learning, behavioral and/or contextual theory has come to reflect a more dynamic view of child development (Meece & Daniels, 2007). Employing achievement goal theory, Judith L. Meece along with colleague Samuel Miller, have

through their research indicated that students are more successful developmentally when certain achievement and/or performance goals are established (Meece & Miller, 2001). Although the bulk of Meece and Miller's work focuses on older elementary school children, their research clearly indicates how students benefit from a structured program (Meece & Miller, 1997).

Another key indicator that a structured pre-kindergarten program benefits students during a significant developmental stage which according to Greene (2006) result in both, short-term and long-term academic achievements and social adjustment.

One of the primary elements that led to the success of similar early childhood programs was the existence of content and process standards. There are thirty-six states that presently have standards that address curricular and instructional needs. These states clearly indicate which standards teachers need to teach and students need to know in order to be academically successful. The fact that there is some structure to these early childhood programs is the reason why parents are enrolling students in Preschool programs in preparation to literacy and other academic areas (Blaustein, 2005).

An overview of Early Childhood Interventions in a large scale Early Childhood Longitudinal Study claims that children who are disadvantaged arrive at school less prepared and thus widen the gap as they attend school. Unfortunately, these students (data shows will usually suffer major setbacks) have significant drawbacks such as, dropping out of school, unemployment, consistent crime, welfare assistance and delinquency (Weikart, 1996). The high school completion rate is a valuable indicator to determine long term evidence of the effects of early childhood intervention. One of the key findings by Schweinhart and Weikart (1993) regarding the High/Scope Perry

Preschool program indicated that adults who had participated in a quality preschool program were academically and socially more successful. Other studies regarding this program and similar programs indicated that students who participated in early schooling experienced half as many criminal arrests, higher earnings, real estate wealth, increased high school graduation, and never relied on welfare assisted programs (Schweinhart, 2002).

There is significant research from an overseas Institute for Early Education Research whose findings have discovered that children who live in poverty are 18 months behind in comparison to average students when they enroll in kindergarten (Barnett, Brown & Shore, 2004). All children should benefit from early childhood intervention practices but this is even more evident for children who are economically disadvantaged or live in stressful family conditions which include family violence, child abuse, drug substance abuse, race discrimination, sexual abuse, malnourishment, and teen pregnancy (Barnett, Brown & Shore, 2004). All these circumstances can delay development and the ability to achieve to the fullest potential reducing behavior and academic problems. This reiterates the importance of an early intervention pre-kindergarten program for three- and four-year old children whose participation will increase their cognitive, physical, and social development (Saskatchewan Education, 1997).

The derived benefits of attending an early intervention pre-kindergarten program according to research is an increase in children's I.Q. scores, less special education placements, and a focus on nutrition and health. Examples of early intervention programs include the Head Start program which has been in operation for more than

twenty-five years, the Perry Preschool Project a twenty-seven year study in Ypsilanti, Michigan from 1962-1965, and the Abecedarian Project which tracked children for twenty-one years (Hinkle, 2000; Saskatchewan Education, 1997). In the Abecedarian Project, children as infants were randomly selected from extremely low-income families to participate in a high quality early care and educational program. An experimental group as well as a control group was selected from this group of infants who were tracked for twenty-one years. Data from this project indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group on cognitive assessments in the areas of math and reading. In addition, the majorities of these students went on to later enroll in college and/or were employed in jobs that required high level skills (Campbell et al., 2002).

Barnett's review of the various studies determines that Early Childhood Education is a worthwhile investment (Barnett, 2002). Fifteen of these studies focused on programs with children ages zero- to six-years old and 13 studies included three- and four-year olds who were enrolled in Head Start or public school programs. Findings reflect positive outcomes in their IQ and achievement test scores. The effects on academic performance were measured by short and long term goals. Some of the short and long term goals reduced dropout rates, decreased entry into special education programs, increased passing rates in the state assessments, reduced juvenile crime, increased attendance rates, and improved school readiness as they entered Kindergarten. Evidence regarding the long-term effects on cognitive and social-emotional development of children who participate in pre-kindergarten programs exists, but too many scenarios and/or variables exist which have clouded true outcomes (Garces et al., 2000). Bridging the gap between preschool and the primary grades is a challenge that must be met to

improve the social and economic investment in our children. The benefits are reaped by our society when our students increase their educational achievement, improve their chances for graduation, attend postsecondary schools, decrease crime, and become productive citizens of our communities (Barnett & Ackerman, 2006).

Attendance is another important factor correlated to a solid pre-kindergarten program and increased cognitive gains. Research demonstrates a significant gain in the cognitive assessment of students who attended a pre-school program in comparison to those students who were not enrolled. Attending a preschool program increases math and reading scores when they enroll in a kindergarten program. Hosley also makes references to the need for additional funding to provide opportunities for all students to attend a pre-kindergarten program (Hosley, 2000). However, there is no law that requires students to attend pre-kindergarten. Currently, children attend a pre-kindergarten program on a voluntary basis since it is not mandatory. Parents are most likely to send their children to pre-kindergarten if they believe that it will be beneficial and will increase their children's success in school. It is vital to the success of a pre-kindergarten program to garner community support and ownership by promoting and working in positive collaborative partnerships in the establishment of the program (Saskatchewan Education, 1997).

From the introduction and funding of the Head Start program in the mid-1960's to its reauthorization by Congress in 1998, there has existed much debate regarding its overall success. With the rise of more structured pre-kindergarten programs research has shifted from merely examining social and cultural issues and has focused on more specific outcomes (Garces et al., 2000). This shift in data-collection and research now

focuses on defining key areas of need and prescriptive interventions; preventing reading difficulties in young children to specify performance measures for children participating in Head Start programs such as, the knowledge of the letters of the alphabet, print awareness, recognition of a word as a unit of print, and associating sounds with written words (Garces et al., 2000).

Utilizing current data, teachers have taken the responsibility of teaching their pre-kindergarten children with the expectation of parental support and reinforcement at home, yet many understand that teachers must go it alone. There is a desire to establish a partnership between parent and teacher in order for the readiness and social skills to be attained favorably, however gaps still exist (Harradine & Clifford, 1996; Piotrkowski, Botsrko & Matthews, 2000; West, Germino-Hausken & Collins, 1993).

Literacy Building

Research reflects that infants start learning in the first few months of their birth and not on the first day they register for Kindergarten or first grade (Kuhl, 2002). Parents and caretakers assume the role of their first teachers. In the first three years of life, children are building connections at a rapid pace twice faster than adults (Kuhl, 2002). This brain activity/development continues forming connections until the onset of puberty. These connections and this brain development is what allow for the storage of information in each brain (Kuhl, 2002). Evidence of this brain activity is evident when examining brain waves as children are actively engaged in playing and/or are attentively listening to the parent use language. This process has allowed researchers to observe and confirm how the brain responds to new information as if it were a new language.

This type of examination illustrates how early in life, the brain is very plastic and how quickly it learns new information. This type of study also examines how children learn best (Kuhl, 2002).

One of the major components that is crucial to a child's development and is fostered by a structured pre-kindergarten program is the development of language and literacy. According to Brostrom (2006), reading and writing has been viewed by both parents and educators as two separate cognitive courses and thus were addressed as two separate disciplines and taught in isolation. The process usually involved a formal instruction in the process of reading (for school age children) and once the skills were acquired, children were exposed to a variety of text which would not only allow their skills to prosper, but would also allow them exposure to various genres (Brostrom, 2006). However, in 1985 the Council on Childhood Reading deemed reading aloud as the single most important activity for literacy building in young children. "More recent research has helped us to further understand that the continuous process of language and literacy development begins early in life and depends heavily on environmental influences" (Landry, 2005, p. 50).

Literacy is a crucial component of a quality pre-kindergarten program addressing letter and word recognition, beginning and ending sounds, vocabulary, and comprehension (Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm & Waldfogel, 2004). Teachers utilize a variety of assessments such as Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) and its Spanish counterpart; Tejas Lee, diagnostic tools which provide an instrument that identify prescriptive instruction and the strategies to address those components. The practice of utilizing a pre-literacy and/or literacy development program may benefit a

developmentally appropriate classroom as research by (Magnuson et al., 2004) propose that only minimal gains are made within a loosely structured program.

A developmentally appropriate classroom provides many opportunities for students to engage in play and hands on exploration while they are learning meaningful knowledge and understanding for the years to come. That is to say that these classrooms must be able to provide children with varied tangible learning experiences/activities which can be internalized and in time become part of the child's knowledge base (Miller, 2005). At the same time, these young children develop their self-confidence; exhibit a language repertoire, more creativity, and a longer attention span (Blaustein, 2005). Much of what is provided for children in pre-kindergarten programs are a direct reflection on current No Child Left Behind accountability trends (Stipek, 2006). With less than half of the states participating in pre-kindergarten programs developing curricular standards it would be extremely difficult for many educators to implement a structured program, much less one with developmentally appropriate classrooms (Neuman & Roskos, 2005). Based on NCLB and accountability mandates the development of an appropriate classroom may have been limited since the standards provided were basically aligned with a K-12 focus and not so much a whole-child approach (Stipek, 2006). Still, the standards provided did allow schools to focus goals around reading and math curricula and as such did allow for the development of structured pre-literacy programs.

Early Childhood Programs: A Historical Perspective

In the year 1830's, primary school educators opposed the concept of having infant schools in the Boston Public School system claiming that these youngsters would be too difficult to control (Beatty, 2004). Both mental-health specialists and child-rearing advice-givers debated against this concept claiming that early stimulation was harmful and damaging to children. Arguments also stipulated that men were not supportive towards the plan (Beatty, 2004).

In the late 1800s, Wisconsin was the state that allowed 4 year olds to participate in Kindergarten and receive state funding (Vinovskis, 2005). In 1903 New Jersey followed the same pattern and in 1949 Pennsylvania allowed 4 to 6 year old children to remain in Kindergarten with no state funding (Mitchell, 2001).

In spite of the opposition, historian Maris Vinovskis documents a large number of three- and four-year olds registered and were attending the public school system until the mid 19th century. Numbers dwindled as urban schools became divided by age and academically standardized (Beatty, 2004).

In 1860, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody opened the first English-speaking Kindergarten public school in Boston which promoted an open environment that allowed for learning through play. Friedrich Froebel, German Kindergarten founder, who was an advocate of closed environment which most schools offered (Ronda, 1999). The superintendent did not support the Kindergarten program after a year's span due to lack of funding (Ronda, 1999).

Kindergarten was primarily seen as an educational vehicle for children of poverty. Bessie Locke founded the National Kindergarten Association (NKA) in 1909 with the goal of bringing Kindergarten to all the children in the nation (Beatty, 2004). Not being a professional educator, she resorted to taking advice from prominent businessmen, universities, and well known educational reformers such as John Dewey (Beatty, 2004). The NKA addressed the commissioner for approval to establish a Kindergarten Bureau, but the bill failed in Congress. Locke's persistence contributed to a tremendous increase in the number of students attending Kindergarten in public and private schools to 300 percent (Beatty, 2004).

The Works Progress Administration created nursery schools for three- and four-year olds anticipating that public schools would be receptive to an early childhood program; unfortunately few public educational systems were in favor (Beatty, 2004). With the onset of World War II, funding became available to sponsor Children's Centers to care for children around the clock. President Truman, however, eliminated funding shortly after the war ended (Beatty, 2004).

During 1960-1970, four additional states created 4 year old programs (Beatty, 2004). The primary motivation of most pre-kindergarten programs is to increase opportunities of children improving school readiness and finally achieving academic success in school (Hinkle, 2000). This is the ultimate reason why states and school districts are targeting three- and four-year old children (Beatty, 2004).

In the year 1965, Hawaii expanded state funded Head Start Programs (Mitchell, 2001). During the same year, research on the benefits of early education and intervention led to the founding of Head Start and championed by Marian Wright

Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund and Senator Ted Kennedy who were instrumental in the large budget increases during Clinton's administration (Beatty, 2004).

In 1965, just 5% of three-year olds and 16% of four-year olds were enrolled in some type of early care and education (ECE) program. Today, those percentages have more than quadrupled, with young children enrolled in a wide variety of programs, including home-and center-based child care, preschool for three-and four year olds, Head Start, and state funded prekindergarten. (as cited in Barnett & Ackerman, 2006, p. 86)

...the federal Head Start program serves over 900,000 children at a cost of \$7 billion per year. (as cited in Barnett & Ackerman, 2006, p. 86)

In 1966, reflecting a basic child-care need, both New York and California sponsored pre-kindergarten programs on a half-day basis and during 1968 Connecticut appropriated state funding for their program (Mitchell, 2001). Additional states pursued a Kindergarten program modeled after the Head Start program and funded it through state and federal monies. Other twenty three states continued to offer pre-kindergarten programs and receive state money for Head Start during the decades of 1980-1990 (Mitchell, 2001). The education reform act of 1980 and the panel report, *A Nation at Risk* was the motivating factor that created the urgency of expanding the pre-kindergarten programs to target the children who are at-risk and are low income (Mitchell, 2001). As of 2002, 40 states had some type of state and/or federal funded pre-kindergarten program targeted for the at-risk children who come from low socio-economic status. "In fact, there has been a 17% increase in children attending pre-kindergarten nationwide since 2001, according to a 2004 study by the trust for early education a pre-school advocacy group" (Beatty, 2004, p. 3). Most states offer pre-kindergarten programs and are expanding to include three and four-year old children.

The dilemma regarding programs such as these is preparing for implementation and any projected growth. Educators must ensure that a component for improving capacity is built into the program; one that addresses growth in the early childhood programs, highly qualified staff, facilities, and resources, etc. (Mitchell, 2001).

Policymakers must also accept the premise that cognitive skills, not only in reading and math form a strong foundation and tend to remain with children well into their adolescent years (Downer & Pianta, 2006).

The bottom line regarding head-start and/or pre-kindergarten programs is that they tend to overextend themselves and often duplicate services already provided by the government. A true instructional and/or school readiness program should not also provide medical and other social services programs, they should be keyed in solely on providing a quality instructional program (Greene, 2006). By narrowing the scope of what these programs must achieve; and that is delivering school-ready children, policymakers can channel monies on true needs and not duplicate services. If this practice is adopted, early education programs will no longer carry the connotation that they are a program solely for the socio-economically deprived. In the past a division has existed where the wealthy sent their young children to private schools and the economically challenged utilized the Head Start program.

Pre-kindergarten and Socio-economic Factors

According to Downer and Pianta (2006) although many more children are school ready at an earlier age, many students, especially those affected by socio-environmental factors, still require greater intervention. These interventions, although intended to level

the playing field have oftentimes been utilized as de facto child care rather than authentic early childhood programs. A key factor that determines whether children with barriers succeed not only academically, but in life is reliant on whether school districts view those barriers as challenges to overcome or whether they use them as excuses for failure (Blankstein & Noguera, 2004). Clearly the role played by early education opportunities has changed as the family dynamic has shifted. Educators when examining and contending with issues that impact a child's academic success must be cognizant of the fact that certain generalizations of certain demographics cannot be allowed (Noguera, 2004). For example, the traditional belief that the Hispanic household is an extended, tightly knit unit (as espoused by Reggie White) is no longer true. It is for that reason that educators need to examine the role of a pre-kindergarten/Head Start program and their goals. In fact, much of what has been absent in this examination of school readiness is the connection between the role of educational institutions and immigrant populations (Noguera, 2004). With more families shifting from a traditional nuclear family to single parent household, Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs have developed first as a de facto day care system to a school readiness program (Heymann, Penrose & Earle, 2006). "In 2003, 60% of women with children under six years and 77% of women with children between the ages of six and seventeen years were in the work force" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004), while in 1940 these numbers were 6% and 11%, respectively (as cited by Heymann et al., 2006, p. 190.)

A key area which has been examined in the past and clearly should remain relevant to this study is the impact of structured pre-kindergarten programs and

outcomes. How do students with socio-economic barriers fare when provided with a structured pre-kindergarten program? One item to keep in mind goes back to the issue of operating through generalizations. It is important to remain objective in examining all aspects of the situation and not falling into the trap of utilizing research which as Dr. Pedro A. Noguera calls “blame the victim” studies as a means to draw conclusions (Noguera, 2004).

Research has clearly substantiated that children who face socio-economic barriers are more likely to enter the educational system with limited academic skills and often those limitations multiply never allowing these children to catch up (Magnuson et al., 2004). If these children are to be successful, it is truly important for policymakers and educators to ensure that these children are not marginalized and that the generalizations Dr. Noguera spoke about do not continue. We cannot operate under the assumption that school programs are merely “child savers” that rescue children from homes that are economically and culturally impoverished (Karoly et al., 1998). The existing paradigm that labels impoverished children as a setback to the country’s educational system has to truly examine research that correlates early intervention with academic success and stop making excuses.

Pre-kindergarten and Barriers for Hispanic Children

For Hispanic children it is even more important to stop making excuses and accept the challenges that these children face. It is important to examine their situation from all perspectives and with the understanding that numerous variables exist which affect their educational opportunities (Valenzuela, 2002).

At the macro level, research conducted by Orfield (1992) and Chapa and Valencia (1993) shows that immigration patterns have combined with poverty, frustrated desegregation efforts, and systemic educational neglect to give U.S. Mexicans the unfortunate distinction of being the most segregated ethnic/racial group in our nation's schools: "Hispanic students attending schools in California and Texas experience greater segregation than Blacks in Alabama and Mississippi." (as cited in Valenzuela, 2002, p. 3)

Aside from the socio-economic and segregation factors that impact the Hispanic population, there also exists the factor that this minority now has become a majority in many cities and states. "Between 1960 and 2000, the number of Hispanics in the United States grew fivefold—from 7 million to 35 million people" (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7). "In the process, they tripled their share of the nation's population, growing from less than 4% to 12.5%. By mid-2001, Hispanics numbered 37 million and had become the country's largest minority group" (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7). By mid-2005, they had reached nearly 43 million (14.4% of the population) and accounted for half the nation's population growth in the previous year" (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7). "This rapid expansion is expected to continue for decades to come. By 2050, Hispanics are projected to number about 100 million and constitute about one-quarter of the nation's population (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7).

Consistent with these factors, the Hispanic share of the nation's youngest children is considerably larger than their share of the population as a whole. For example, an analysis commissioned by the Task Force of the demographics of children

in 2000 found that, among the 33.4 million children ages 0-8 in the United States, 6.8 million were Hispanic—20% of the total (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7). Moreover, the Hispanic share of the 0-8 age group is projected to reach 26% as early as 2030 (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7). Consistent with this projection, 23% of the 4.1 million babies born in the United States in 2004 had Hispanic mothers, up from 21% in 2000 (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7).

For Hispanics the burden to bear and the barriers to overcome are huge especially regarding the education of their children. According to the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics (2007) “Para Nuestros Ninos” (For Our Children), over one-fourth of children being born in the United States are Hispanic and many come from homes where parents have very little education and are low income. As with the examination of socio-economic barriers and challenges, policymakers and educators need to examine and take into consideration race and ethnicity factors which impact student success.

Increasingly, immigration is recognized as a complicating factor in analyses of race and schooling because of the wide variability in the academic performance of immigrant students, but this recognition has not discouraged generalizations about the relationship between race and schooling. The so-called racial achievement gap is now widely regarded as one of the most pressing problems confronting American education (Jencks & Phillips, 1998), and the presence of a large number of immigrant students (nearly one fifth of the U.S. school-age

population) only complicates the search for understanding and solutions (Noguera, 2004).

In a re-examination of the High/Scope Perry Project which was implemented in Michigan during the 1960's and tracked the academic and lifestyle achievement of a sample of students that participated in a pre-school program, data reflects that this educational investment paid off, especially for socio-economically disadvantaged children (Nores, Belfield, Barnett & Schweinhart, 2005). A sound, structured pre-literacy program is crucial to closing the gaps for Hispanic students.

In the 1940s the trend was that 87% of children were in the custodial care of a stay at home parent who provided full time child care (Mitchell, 2001). In the United States this is no longer the trend since children less than 6 years old are cared for by someone other than the biological parents and oftentimes requires non-parental childcare (Hernandez, 1995). With such a shift regarding not only child-care programs, but school-readiness programs it is extremely disheartening that policymakers and the business sector have not addressed this shift in demographics (Heymann et al., 2006).

One of the factors that must also brought into the equation regarding pre-kindergarten programs and socio-economics must be the ramifications to minorities and the classes. Angela Valenzuela in her examination on the effects of high-stakes testing and Hispanics stipulated that oftentimes children because of accountability issues are marginalized (Valenzuela, 2002). Minority families are also oftentimes contending with socio-economic factors that do not allow them or limit their means to provide their children with quality pre-kindergarten program and usually settle for what is available (Heymann et al., 2006).

With the greater need for pre-kindergarten Programs due to an increased need for child care opportunities, educators must examine/address the need to make these programs key to impacting children intellectually and socially in the earliest years of their life. During the late 1980s, the largest expansion in pre-kindergarten programs was the provision that it provided new services to families with toddlers and infants. “The National Education Goals Panel established as an objective of Goal 1, that by the year 2000 all children will have access to high-quality, developmentally, appropriate preschool programs (NEGP, 1991, p. 2). One issue that has arisen from current trends regarding pre-kindergarten programs is the fact that there has been a tendency to teach to the test rather than meeting the needs of the whole child. Recent studies have pointed out that there has been a steep decline in programs which allow students/children to participate in play, art, and elective programs (Frost, 2007).

President George W. Bush a staunch supporter and advocate of all preschool programs including Head Start, child care programs, and pre-kindergarten programs understands that they are integral to the development of early literacy and educational successes (Schweinhart, 1994).. His strong interest in this initiative is a key part to No Child Left Behind and the development of early childhood models that show effectiveness (Schweinhart, 1994). President Bush, through the Department of Education understands that these models must include program practices, content, assessment, and staff development (Schweinhart, 1994). An important component of these models is their contribution to the child’s intellectual, physical and social development. Another key component of these models, are pre-school standards that establish what three and four-year old children must be able to do. There needs to be a

determination of how effective the educational model has been in terms of training, consistency, faithful implementation, and comprehensiveness. The research highlights the effectiveness and capability to a high quality preschool program which prepares the children to a bright beginning (Schweinhart, 1994).

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has developed appropriate practices for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergarteners. There are three dimensions for developmentally appropriate practices: age, individual and cultural appropriateness (NAEYC, 1997). In regards to age there is a growth sequence that occurs the first 9 years of their life (NAEYC, 1997). Educators are preparing the learning environment as well as the appropriate experiences in all domains of development which are physical, cognitive, social, and emotional (NAEYC, 2005). In regards to individual appropriateness there is individual pattern of learning as well as growth differences taking into consideration their personality, family background and learning style. In regards to cultural appropriateness it stresses the importance of social and cultural contexts where learning experiences are meaningful (NAEYC, 2005).

All early childhood teachers need to know what students need to learn and the best approach to curriculum design based on what we know about the child's developmental status. Teachers must have an understanding about the developmental changes that occur during the early years from birth to 8 years old. Developmentally appropriate practice is about how children develop as they are learning (NAEYC, 2005).

Public perceptions during the 1970s-1980s were that the American children were falling behind academically in comparison to the rest of the world. This created an urgency to focus academic efforts on the children. Alarmed educators and developmentalists agreed that children learn best in open, active environments. The Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) guidelines have been developed by numerous professional organizations and published by NAEYC (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Developmentally appropriate practices are crucial to the development of children and meeting their needs. By defining student need, using the appropriate curriculum and resources, differentiating instruction, and including parental involvement, children can be successful (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). These behaviors are exhibited in a classroom where:

Cognitive development is described as occurring through an interactive process between the child and the environment requiring self initiation, active exploration, and experimentation. It is suggested that learning materials should be concrete rather than abstract and that children should pursue activities based on their own interests within the context of play. Adults are advised to prepare the environment based on observations of specific children... and facilitate rather than direct instruction, because adult-child and child-child interactions are considered critical components of the environment (Caruso, Dunn & File, 1992, p. 28).

There is much debate concerning how to teach young children in order to ensure their development and learning. It is beneficial to have discussions and conversations among our teaching professionals which serve as professional development and an increase in their knowledge base (NAEYC, 1997).

Young children construct their own understanding learning through their daily experiences at home, at their preschool, and in the community. The active participation

with other children, siblings, adults and others contribute to the development of their own development and learning. Children are constantly learning as they communicate, observe, manipulate, and reflect on their experiences. Mental structures are constantly changing as children process new experiences that require readjustment to new learning. Teachers must cease the opportunity to reflect and provide open ended questioning that will deepen their experiences (Huitt & Hummel, 2003).

Teachers will enhance intelligence through the constructivist model where children are allowed to utilize manipulatives, rotate among centers to promote interaction, field trips and other experiences which also promote socialization (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). Schools have limited their environments in order for students to participate actively in their own education. Classrooms need to promote settings where desks are clustered for active collaboration among the children and the teacher (Hausfather, 1996).

According to Vygotsky, connections between children and the cultural context provides shared interactions and experiences. The social development theory by Vygotsky challenges the pedagogy utilized in classrooms where teachers lecture and students memorize and recite back to the teacher. Children do not internalize the information therefore; will be ill prepared to function successfully in our global society. We must make structural changes where children will be provided with opportunities to excel intellectually and socially (Hausfather, 1996).

Piaget's views are frequently compared to those of Lev Vygotsky, who believed that social interaction would advance cognitive and behavior development. Some of his methods have been supported and accepted and others have not received support. Piaget

believes that infants are born with reflexes which control their behavior as they adapt to the environment. The pre-operational stage refers to toddlers and early childhood children who learn through conversations and interactions using their imagination and creativity. Early childhood programs are modeled after Piaget's theories utilizing the constructivist model where children are actively involved in discovery learning, labeling, symbols, and word walls enhance their vocabulary cognitive intelligence (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). The NAEYC guidelines are embedded in the constructivist theory and articulated by Piaget. There are three assumptions that are recommended in the guidelines: 1) the children are viewed as scientists, 2) learning occurs in a creative, constructive process; and 3) Knowledge and skills is the basis for each of the content areas (Maxwell, 1996).

According to Vygotsky (1962), language is the primary function when children and adults communicate with each other. At the age of three or four years old, children have acquired the skills in language learning having a sufficiently large repertoire of vocabulary and a good command of the conversational skills. Children continue developing language throughout their elementary schooling, adolescence and adulthood years. Language is not learned through formal instructional setting but through creative experimentation and developmentally appropriate language activities (Mei-Yu, 2000).

Language Acquisition

Infants in the first year of life learn a great deal of language even before they are able to speak. Kuhl (2006) makes a correlation between learning language and the ability to read. Language consists of consonants and vowels making up words. Every

language has their own unique set of consonants and vowels referred as “building blocks.” Infants can hear the differences in sounds while adults no longer hear those distinctions of the language. Infants have the ability to acquire the building blocks of their language at a very early stage (Kuhl, 2002).

Kuhl’s studies map the patterns of language as infants develop the brain. At 6 months the development consists of consonants and vowels and at 9 months the patterns of words. Infants store millions of information just by listening to us conversing. The infant brain is focusing on what they are hearing in their native language. Infants do not relate to a foreign language which is new to them (Kuhl, 2002).

They newly tested infants who were exposed to twelve play sessions in Chinese by graduate students and the results were astounding. The infants adjusted and were able to hear the sounds of the Chinese language and their brains remembered the patterns they heard. Again, they were like little computers registering all the information as they listened to the Chinese speak. The infants that had the ability to distinguish the speech sound at 6 months are correlated to language ability in the future years (Kuhl, 2002).

Structure, especially regarding the academic performance of pre-kindergarten students is a component that requires examination specifically when tied to language acquisition and literacy. Based on this review of literature it stands to reason that data would support the hypothesis that young Hispanic children, given the opportunity to attend a three-year old structured literacy program, will acquire literacy skills and perform academically above what is normally is expected from this age group.

Based on the fact that current assessment instrument utilized to examine the acquisition and development of pre-literacy skills are more and more utilized with

younger students, existing research implies that it may be more beneficial to provide children with a program in a developmentally appropriate manner beginning at a much earlier age.

Given the fact that this trend provides educators with an opportunity to provide a more prescriptive and structured literacy program should prove authentic. A crucial component of this structured program is not only the use of timely and accurate data, but also the utilization of highly qualified and competent staff. With regard to this study and current practices, prior and current research supports the need for further research. It is vital to the examination of pre-kindergarten students who participate in a structured pre-literacy program to review literature on policy and investment in pre-kindergarten programs, theories of early intervention, literacy building, a perspective of early childhood programs, pre-kindergarten and socio-economic factors, pre-kindergarten and barriers for Hispanic children, developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood programs, and language acquisition. As Dr. Pedro Noguera states, “Education remains the best hope for the poor and the powerless, and one of the few means of reducing the profound disparities in wealth and opportunity that characterize American society” (Reed, Noguera, Cohen & Matsuda, 2004, p. 9). With respects to that edict, this review of current literature and practices, it only stands to reason that a structured pre-kindergarten literacy program will not only improve school readiness, but also provide the hope and promise for those children that characterize American society.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students after participating in a three year structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in a structured literacy program in selected elementary schools in the Laredo Independent School District in Texas. This quantitative study will investigate if participation in a structured literacy program was beneficial. This study seeks to provide information and direction for district educators and school leaders contemplating the benefits of a three-year old pre-kindergarten program at all district campuses.

The participating South Texas school district, as part of its commitment to ensure all students are reading at grade level by the end of third grade, begins monitoring student reading achievement at the pre-kindergarten level. Results for this study were obtained by examining results from the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) and the Tejas Lee, its Spanish language counterpart. This is a criterion-referenced test utilized to measure reading skills. TPRI and Tejas Lee is a comprehensive instrument that has a screening and an inventory section. Students who do not meet the passing requirements/criteria for the screening section are then administered the inventory section.

This study posed two research questions regarding the impact or lack of a structured pre-literacy program. The first queried the differences in academic performance between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students in a structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in the structured literacy program in selected elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District. The second question examined the relationship between daily attendance rates and the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students enrolled in a structured program.

This quantitative study, following a review of literature, was designed to determine if Hispanic student participation in a structured literacy program was beneficial versus those who do not. Additionally, if there a difference in student performance between the groups of students was found, which group did better? Examination of the stated problem, the identified population, and the results from TPRI/Tejas Lee data provided comparative data on this question. Chi-square analyses was used to analyze the achievement-based data. A t-test was used to assess the attendance rate. The data set consisted of three TPRI/Tejas Lee indicators (Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills), six content area scores (Reading, Spanish Oral Language, English Oral Language, Math, Science, and History) and one attendance measure.

Population

The population for this study will include an experimental group of seven elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District in Texas. From a total

population of 140 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten during the 2003-2004 school years, a randomly selected sample size of 104 students was drawn. The sample size was determined by research-based sampling techniques (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The control group consisted of a sample size of 104 pre-kindergarten students. Of the fourteen potential school campuses, seven were selected that most closely approximate to the demographic characteristics of the experimental school campuses and who did not participate in a structured literacy program. Both groups were composed of similar demographics which allowed for greater fidelity in the collection and examination of data. Regarding a description of both the experimental and control groups, a demographic comparison of the sample reflects almost identical distinctions. For the experimental group which was comprised of Alma Pierce Elementary, D. D. Hachar Elementary, J. A. Kawas Elementary, H. Ligarde Elementary, J. C. Martin Elementary, Sanchez-Ochoa Elementary, and H. B. Zachry Elementary descriptors were almost identical. For these students who comprised an average of 14% of the campus population, students were about 100% Hispanic, 98% economically disadvantaged, 88% limited English proficient, 94% at-risk, and had a mobility rate of about 21% (TEA 2006a). For the control group comprised of students from A. Bruni Elementary, Buenos Aires Elementary, L. Daiches Elementary, F. Farias Elementary, Heights Elementary, K. Tarver Elementary, J. Leyendecker Elementary, C. MacDonell Elementary, C. Milton Elementary, M. Ryan Elementary, Santa Maria Elementary, Santo Nino Elementary, and A. Dovalina Elementary campuses. For these students who comprised an average of 14% of the campus population, students were about 100% Hispanic, 98% economically

disadvantaged, 93% limited English proficient, 94% at-risk, and had a mobility rate of about 21% (TEA, 2006b).

The variables that selected the students from the seven campuses were socio-economic based on free and reduced lunch, bilingual based on the Pre-Las English proficiency assessment and homelessness (also a socio-economic status measure). This study investigated the three year longitudinal effect of the experimental group at the completion of their kindergarten school year in May, 2006. Students in the experimental group were required to be enrolled continuously and uninterruptedly in a pre-kindergarten program from 2003 to 2006.

The experimental group participating in the evaluative study met the following criteria:

1. Students were enrolled in the 2003-2004 pre-kindergarten, structured literacy program in the district.
2. Students were consecutively and continuously enrolled as a three-year old pre-kindergarten student, as a four-year old pre-kindergarten student, and as a five year old kindergarten student.

This study will compare both groups of students in terms of academic performance.

Instrumentation

The study was quantitative in nature and variables that were used in the study are as follows: Pre-reading skills based on the 2006 end of year TPRI/Tejas Lee, Kindergarten grades (reading, social studies, science, math, conduct), and the 2005-2006

attendance days marked with the number of days present for instruction (Laredo Independent School District, 2006). The TPRI/Tejas Lee end of the year results 2005-2006 will be used as a post test measure of the child's knowledge in the proficiency of reading. These skills will include reading comprehension, phonological awareness, and graphophonemic development. The results will also include if the child is developed or still developing in the area of reading.

With respects to the definition of what identifies a student as to being developed and/or still developing there are specific criteria under the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) and the Tejas Lee. Under the literacy skills of Phonological Awareness, students must show proficiency in four of the five tasks which comprise Phonological Awareness (rhyming, blending word parts, blending phonemes, detecting initial sounds, and/or detecting final sounds) (TEA, 2006c). In Graphophonemic Awareness, students must be proficient in two of two tasks (letter name recognition and letter to sound linking (TEA, 2006c). For Comprehension, students must be able to answer four out of five questions regarding listening comprehension (TEA, 2006c).

Regarding Tejas Lee, students also are asked to show proficiency in the same identified tasks under each skill; however there are more items listed under each task reflecting the Spanish alphabet. For example, under *Conocimiento de la letra impresa* (Book and Print Awareness), students must show proficiency in eight out of ten items (TEA, 2006c). For *Identificación de las letras* (letter naming) students must master twenty-four out of thirty tasks (TEA, 2006c). The same number of items must be mastered under *Conocimiento de los Sonidos* (Letter Sound Identification/Sound-Symbol correspondence) (TEA, 2006c). For *Conocimiento Fonológica* (Phonological

Awareness), students must master three out of three tasks including *Unión de las sílabas* (Blending Syllables into Words), *Segmentación de las sílabas* (Segmenting Words into Syllables), and *Identificación del sonido inicial* (First Sound Identification) (TEA, 2006c). Finally, regarding Comprensión Auditiva (Listening Comprehension), students must master five out of six tasks (TEA, 2006c). These diagnostic assessments are individually administered to kindergarten students at five years of age.

Procedure

The study will be conducted in the spring of 2007. Permission will be sought from the President of the Board of Trustees to collect student data from selected elementary schools in the Laredo Independent School District. A letter addressed to the President of the Board of Trustees will assure subject confidentiality, as well as a detailed explanation of the researcher's intent. Student anonymity will be concealed through the assignment of numbers instead of their names during data collection, analysis and on the student test results. Upon receiving permission to collect student data, the researcher will send notification of this approval along with a copy of the Board President's letter to each campus principal and the director of early childhood. As the researcher, a PEIMS report will be requested for students that participated for the three consecutive school years within a week's timeframe identifying the students who participated in the pre-kindergarten structured literacy program as three-year olds. In addition, 104 students will be identified from the seven non-participating campuses and will be randomly selected using the assignment of numbers for students on the PEIMS list. Principals will be provided a list of the randomly selected students and copies of

student records identifying the TPRI/Tejas Lee results, grades and attendance for the 2005-2006 school year will be requested within a 10-day timeframe. Student records of the control group will follow the same procedure in the collection of student data.

Data Analysis

TPRI/Tejas Lee test results for the five year old kindergarten students will be used to gather preliminary data on pre-kindergarten readiness skills on the 2003-2004 student groups. As a means to check the validity of the TPRI/Tejas Lee instrument, field tests were conducted in three large urban areas and border regions in Texas (Linan-Thompson, Bryant, Dickson & Kouzekanani, 2005). The two instruments on their own are utilized to gauge students regarding literacy and whether there exists a need for intervention (Linan-Thompson et al., 2005). Print knowledge, phonological awareness, word recognition, letter knowledge and listening comprehension are assessed with various components utilizing sub-tests (Linan-Thompson et al., 2005). Regarding reliability on these sub-tests, they provide results in a high range between 0.78 and 0.91 (Linan-Thompson et al., 2005). Regarding literacy comprehension the inventories have an excellent correlation with the Woodcock-Johnson instrument also ranging around 0.82 (Linan-Thompson et al., 2005). The only visible deficiencies where marks ranged between 0.37 and 0.60 were in the areas of letter naming and syllable tasks (Linan-Thompson et al., 2005).

The one group post test design will be used with three-year old students who participated in the structured literacy program until age five and with five year old students who did not participate in the structured literacy program to determine effects

on student performance. The student data analysis will be performed on the collected data by an electronic statistical software program. The data will be analyzed through the use of appropriate techniques as identified by (Gall et al., 1996). Multiple displays such as tables and charts will be used to present findings. The results of this study will be reported using descriptive data including mean, frequency, and percentages utilizing the TPRI/Tejas Lee assessment, grades, and attendance. Participation criteria for students who were enrolled in the pre-kindergarten program consisted of free/reduced lunch (income), and/or limited English proficient and/or identification as being homeless.

In this study the demographic variables, used to disaggregate the data, are program placement, the student's free/reduced lunch status (a measure of socioeconomic status), the student's limited English proficiency (based on LEP status) and/or homeless status (also a measure of socioeconomic status). The dependent variables for Research Question #1 are Pre-reading skills (Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills) and report grades six content area scores (Reading, Spanish Oral Language, English Oral Language, Math, Science, and Social Studies). Each of the dependent variables related to Research Question #1 will have data reported using frequencies and percentages. The dependent variable for Research Question #2 is level of attendance. Means and standard deviations will be used to report attendance data. A chi-square analysis will be used to analyze the academic achievement (Research Question #1) of the experimental group of students who participated in a structured literacy program versus the control group of students who did not participate in the structured literacy program. An independent samples t-test will be used to analyze the attendance measure (Research Question #2) between the two groups.

Research question 1 regarding the difference in academic performance between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students in a structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in the structured literacy program in selected elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District was analyzed utilizing a chi-square analysis using Texas Primary Reading Inventory and/or Tejas Lee results for Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills. A chi-square analysis was also performed on the relationship between participants and non-participants regarding academic success in the areas of math, science, social studies, English oral language, and Spanish oral language. Data was collected from student Kindergarten records.

Regarding question number two and the analysis of the relationship between daily attendance rates and the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students enrolled in a structured program versus those who were not enrolled. A t-test of independent samples analysis was performed utilizing attendance data for students who participated in a pre-kindergarten structured literacy program versus a comparable sample of those who did not. Data was collected from student Kindergarten records.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This study examined the relationship between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students after participating in a three year structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in a structured literacy program. This quantitative study was conducted to determine if participation in a structured literacy program was beneficial. Chi-square analyses were used to analyze achievement based data. An independent samples t-test was used to examine attendance data. The data set consisted of three TPRI/Tejas Lee indicators (Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills), six content area scores (Reading, Spanish Oral Language, English Oral Language, Math, Science, and History) and one attendance measure.

Chapter IV consists of an analysis of the data obtained from Laredo Independent School District Kindergarten TPRI/Tejas Lee results and student data. The procedures for data analysis and a summary of the findings are presented in this chapter.

Research Question 1

What was the difference in academic performance between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students in a structured literacy program compared to the academic

performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in the structured literacy program in selected elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District?

Calculation Procedures

A chi-square analysis was performed using Texas Primary Reading Inventory and/or Tejas Lee results for Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills. A chi-square analysis was also performed on the relationship between participants and non-participants regarding academic success in the areas of math, science, social studies, English oral language, and Spanish oral language. Data were collected from student Kindergarten records.

The researcher examined the cross tabulation for the first three examination variables (Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills) based on whether student literacy skills were developed or still developing. Each variable will be discussed in turn.

Graphophonemic Knowledge

Results

Research question 1a, investigating the interaction between pre-kindergarten program enrollment and success on Graphophonemic Knowledge on the TPRI/Tejas Lee were analyzed using a chi-square analysis procedure. Table 1 reports the cross-tabulation statistics.

TABLE 1. Cross Tabulation of Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Success in Graphophonemic Knowledge in Pre-kindergarten

Graphophonemic Knowledge Program	Developed	Still Developing	Total
No	5	99	104
Yes	89	15	104
Total	94	114	208

Table 2 provides the data for the chi-square analysis. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that the variables in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, were statistically related to each other. That is, if one knows something about one variable a meaningful inference can be drawn about the other. In other words, students who attended a pre-kindergarten program were achieving at a significantly higher level than students who did not attend.

TABLE 2. Chi-square Data for Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Success in Graphophonemic Knowledge

χ^2	df	Significance
136.96	1	0.001

Phonemic Awareness

Results

Research Question 1b, investigating the interaction between pre-kindergarten program enrollment and success on Phonemic Awareness on the TPRI/Tejas Lee were analyzed using a chi-square analysis procedure. Table 3 reports the cross-tabulation counts.

TABLE 3. Cross Tabulation of Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Success in Phonemic Awareness in Pre-kindergarten

Phonemic Awareness Program	Developed	Still Developing	Total
No	52	52	104
Yes	96	8	104
Total	148	60	208

Table 4 provides the data for the chi-square analysis. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that the variables in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, were statistically related to each other. That is, if you know something about one variable you can make inferences about the other. In other words, students who attended a pre-kindergarten program were achieving at a significantly higher level than students who did not attend.

TABLE 4. Chi-square Data for Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Success in Phonemic Awareness

χ^2	df	Significance
45.348	1	0.001

Comprehension

Results

Research Question 1c, investigating the interaction between pre-kindergarten program enrollment and success on Comprehension on the TPRI/Tejas Lee was analyzed using a chi-square analysis procedure. Table 5 reports the cross-tabulation counts.

TABLE 5. Cross Tabulation of Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Success in Comprehension in Pre-kindergarten

Comprehension Program	Developed	Still Developing	Total
No	0	104	104
Yes	89	15	104
Total	89	119	208

Table 6 provides the data for the chi-square analysis. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that the variables in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, were statistically related to each other. That is, if you know something about one variable you can make inferences about the other. In other words, students who attended a pre-kindergarten program were achieving at a significantly higher level than students who did not attend.

TABLE 6. Chi-square Data for Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Success in Comprehension

χ^2	df	Significance
155.563	1	0.001

It is the researcher's contention that the data examined in the cross tabulation for the first three examination variables (Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills) based on whether student literacy skills were developed or still developing provide valuable data. This data, however, only provides one aspect regarding the difference in academic performance between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students in a structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in the structured literacy program

in selected elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District. The second area that must be examined and is provided in the following data examines the relevancy of academic data.

Kindergarten Math Grades

Results

Research Question 1d, investigating the interaction between pre-kindergarten program enrollment and Math Grades was analyzed using a chi-square analysis procedure. Table 7 reports the cross-tabulation counts.

TABLE 7. Cross Tabulation of Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Math Grades in Pre-kindergarten

Math Grade Program	Satisfactory	Progressing	Needs Improvement	Total
No	70	29	5	104
Yes	88	15	1	104
Total	158	44	6	208

Table 8 provides the data for the chi-square analysis. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.010. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that the variables in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, were statistically related to each other. That is, if you know something about one variable you can make inferences about the other. In other words, students who attended a pre-kindergarten program received higher report card grades in math than students who did not attend.

TABLE 8. Chi-square Data for Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Math Grades

χ^2	df	Significance
9.172	1	0.010

Kindergarten Science Grades

Results

Research Question 1e, investigating the interaction between pre-kindergarten program enrollment and Science Grades was analyzed using a chi-square analysis procedure. Table 9 reports the cross-tabulation counts.

TABLE 9. Cross Tabulation of Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Science Grades in Pre-kindergarten

Science Grade Program	Satisfactory	Progressing	Total
No	85	19	104
Yes	100	4	104
Total	185	23	208

Table 10 provides the data for the chi-square analysis. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that the variables in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, were statistically related to each other. That is, if one knows something about one variable one can make inferences about the other. In other words, students who attended a pre-kindergarten program received better report card grades in Science than students who did not attend.

TABLE 10. Chi-square Data for Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Science Grades

χ^2	df	Significance
10.999	1	0.001

Kindergarten Social Studies Grades

Results

Research Question 1f, investigating the interaction between pre-kindergarten program enrollment and Social Studies Grades was analyzed using a chi-square analysis procedure. Table 11 reports the cross-tabulation counts.

TABLE 11. Cross Tabulation of Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Social Studies Grades in Pre-kindergarten

Social Studies Grade Program	Satisfactory	Progressing	Needs Improvement	Total
No	85	16	3	104
Yes	101	3	0	104
Total	186	19	3	208

Table 12 provides the data for the chi-square analysis. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that the variables in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, were statistically related to each other. That is, if you know something about one variable you can make inferences about the other. In other words, students who attended a pre-kindergarten program received significant higher Social Studies report card grades than students who did not attend.

TABLE 12. Chi-square Data for Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Social Studies Grades

χ^2	df	Significance
13.271	1	0.001

Kindergarten English Oral Language Grades

Results

Research Question 1g, investigating the interaction between pre-kindergarten program enrollment and English Oral Language Grades was analyzed using a chi-square analysis procedure. Table 13 reports the cross-tabulation counts.

TABLE 13. Cross Tabulation of Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and English Oral Language Grades in Pre-kindergarten

English Oral Language Grade Program	Satisfactory	Progressing	Needs Improvement	Total
No	59	43	2	104
Yes	59	44	1	104
Total	118	87	3	208

Table 14 provides the data for the chi-square analysis. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.842. This was greater than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to fail to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that the variables in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, were not statistically related to each other. That is, if you knew something about one variable you could not make inferences about the other. In other words, student enrollment in a pre-kindergarten program had no impact on English Oral Language Grades.

TABLE 14. Chi-square Data for Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and English Oral Language Grades

χ^2	df	Significance
0.345	1	0.842

Kindergarten Spanish Oral Language Grades

Results

Research Question 1b, investigating the interaction between pre-kindergarten program enrollment and Spanish Oral Language Grades was analyzed using a chi-square analysis procedure. Table 15 reports the cross-tabulation counts.

TABLE 15. Cross Tabulation of Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Spanish Oral Language Grades in Pre-kindergarten

Spanish Oral Language Grade Program	Satisfactory	Progressing	Needs Improvement	Total
No	72	29	3	104
Yes	95	9	0	104
Total	167	38	3	208

Table 16 provides the data for the chi-square analysis. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that the variables in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, were statistically related to each other. That is, if you know something about one variable you can make inferences about the other. In other words, students who attended a pre-kindergarten program were receiving significant better report card grades in Spanish Oral Language than students who did not attend.

TABLE 16. Chi-square Data for Pre-kindergarten Program Enrollment and Spanish Oral Language Grades

χ^2	df	Significance
16.694	1	0.001

All examination scores (Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills) were found to be significantly higher for those students with participation in a structured literacy program. Regarding academic performance indicators, the researcher examined the remaining five examination variables (math, science, social studies, English oral language, and Spanish oral language). All but one examination score (English Oral Language) was found to be significantly related with participation in a structured literacy program. A chi-square analysis was used in all cases to statistically measure the relationship between participants and non-participants, with respect to these key indicators.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between daily attendance rates and the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students enrolled in a structured program versus those who were not enrolled?

Calculation Procedures

An independent samples t-test was performed utilizing attendance data for students who participated in a pre-kindergarten structured literacy program versus a comparable sample of those who did not. Data was collected from student Kindergarten records.

Findings and Discussion

The researcher examined the means and standard deviation regarding Kindergarten attendance for Hispanic student who participated in pre-kindergarten literacy program versus those who did not. A t-test was utilized to examine the differences between the means of the two groups. A comparison of the level of significance generated by the inferential procedure against the critical level of significance (in this case 0.05) was utilized to make a decision regarding the “null hypothesis.” In the sample population was one mean significantly different from the other mean?

Table 17 represents the means and standard deviations of days of attendance for students who attended a pre-kindergarten structured literacy program versus those who did not. An independent sample t-test was used to determine the difference between the two groups. Those results are reported in Table 18. The level of significance for the procedure was 0.001. This was less than the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the decision was made to reject the null hypotheses of no difference. Therefore, it was inferred that the means in the population, from which these sample means were drawn, were different. In other words, students who attended a pre-kindergarten program were attending school at a significant higher rate than students who did not attend.

TABLE 17. Descriptive Statistics for Kindergarten Program Attendance

		Group Statistics			
In Pre-k Program	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Attendance No	104	162.19	16.618	1.629	
Yes	104	169.30	8.817	.865	

TABLE 18. Independent Samples T-test for Equality of Means of Level of Attendance Based on Pre-kindergarten Program Membership

	T-test for Equality of Means					
	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	St. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
						Lower Upper
Attendance (equal variances not assumed)	-3.853	156.761	.000	-7.11	1.844	-10.749 -3.463

In summary, for question one, it can be inferred that differences in academic performance between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students in a structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in the structured literacy program exist. In seven of the eight comparisons conducted a significant difference was observed. In all seven cases, the difference favored those students who had attended the pre-kindergarten program. For question number two, statistical data inferred that the level of daily attendance rates of Hispanic students who had been enrolled in a structured program compared to students who had not been enrolled in the program was higher. These findings are discussed interpretively in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V is divided into three parts. The first part is a summary of the research conducted with respect to the two questions posed. The second part consists of conclusions gathered from the study. Finally, the last part consists of recommendations for further research and further practice.

Summary of Purpose and Hypothesis

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact to academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students after participating in a three year structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in a structured literacy program in selected elementary schools in the Laredo Independent School District in Texas. This study's objective was to determine if participation in a structured literacy program is beneficial. This study will provide information and direction for district educators and school leaders contemplating the benefits of a three-year old pre-kindergarten program at all district campuses.

The researcher formed a hypothesis that young Hispanic children, given the opportunity to attend a three-year old structured literacy program, acquire literacy skills and perform academically above those students who did not participate in the program. Key to the purpose of this study was the understanding that as children grow and develop in today's competitive society, literacy is important because it provides a

foundation for life-long learning. For that reason it becomes necessary to educate all children at an early age. Given that in today's volatile educational system, a comprehensive early childhood program has not been adopted much less one that focuses on pre-literacy and literacy skills; it is vital to examine the possible benefits. Currently, school districts and private institutions allow children to enter kindergarten at different levels of literacy development and reading readiness; this is even truer for today's divergent and burgeoning Hispanic population. Based on research by Bowman et al. (2000), students tend to fare better, both short-term and long-term benefits when allowed to enter an early educational setting. While no specific program is identified as key to this success, it only stands to reason that one that is structured and that has a well defined curriculum would perform at a higher level.

Aside from a lack of research regarding early intervention programs for all students, there exists even less data for Hispanic students. In order to avoid the high first grade level retention that presently exists for Hispanic students, it is essential to provide research on this demographic group regarding Early Childhood Programs. It is this researcher's contention that such a structured program would be even more beneficial for this demographic.

Research Procedures and Methods

This quantitative study, following a review of literature, was designed to determine if Hispanic students participating in a structured literacy program was beneficial versus those who did not attend. Additionally, if there was a difference in student performance between the groups of students, which group did better?

The population for this study included an experimental group of seven elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District in Texas. From a total population of 140 students enrolled in pre-kindergarten during the 2003-2004 school years, a randomly selected sample size of 104 students was drawn. The sample size was determined by research-based sampling techniques (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The control group consisted of a sample size of 104 pre-kindergarten students. Of the 14 potential school campuses 7 were selected that most closely approximate to the demographic characteristics of the experimental school campuses and who did not participate in a structured literacy program. Both groups were composed of similar demographics which allowed for greater fidelity in the collection and examination of data. This study investigated the three year longitudinal effect of the experimental group at the completion of their kindergarten school year in May, 2006. Students in the experimental group were required to be enrolled continuously and uninterruptedly in a pre-kindergarten program from 2003 to 2006.

Examination of the stated problem, the identified population, and the results from TPRI/Tejas Lee data provided comparative data for this study. A Chi-square analyses was used to examine the achievement-based data. A t-test was used to assess the attendance rate. The data set consisted of three TPRI/Tejas Lee indicators (Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension Skills), six content area scores (Reading, Spanish Oral Language, English Oral Language, Math, Science, and Social Studies) and one attendance measure.

Research Questions

Two research questions were addressed in this study. Both questions were designed to investigate if participation in a structured literacy program was beneficial. This study will provide information and direction for district educators and school leaders contemplating the benefits of a three-year old pre-kindergarten program at all district campuses.

Regarding Research Question #1 and the query on the differences in academic performance between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students participating in a structured literacy program compared to the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students not in the structured literacy program, in selected elementary schools in Laredo Independent School District, this researcher found that investigating the interaction between pre-kindergarten program enrollment and success in the identified variables was significant and supported the researcher's hypothesis. As noted in Table 1, regarding Graphophonemic Knowledge, participation in a structured pre-literacy program benefited those students enrolled in the program versus those who did not. The same can be said regarding student success in the areas of Phonemic Awareness (Table 3), and for Comprehension (Table 5).

The second element tied to question #1 focused on student academic performance in the areas of Math, Science, Social Studies, English Oral Language, and Spanish Oral Language as documented in student report card grades. Once again, for four of the five variables, the researcher's hypothesis held fast. In the area of Math as noted in Table 7 Hispanic students who participated in a structured pre-literacy fared

better than those who did not. The same can be said for the areas of Science (Table 9), Social Studies (Table 11), and Spanish Oral Language (Table 15). The only variable that did not support this researcher's hypothesis was in the area of English Oral Language (Table 13). Based on cursory examination of the data, this researcher concluded that language may be a determining factor and that more research must be conducted in this area.

With respects to Question #2 and the relationship between daily attendance rates and the academic performance of Hispanic pre-kindergarten students enrolled in a structured program versus those who were not enrolled, this researcher's hypothesis also held true. As noted in Table 18, statistical data inferred that the level of daily attendance rates of Hispanic students who had been enrolled in a structured program compared to students who had not been enrolled in the program was higher. Thus it can be clearly interpreted that greater attendance promotes greater academic success.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, participation in a structured pre-literacy program appears to benefit Hispanic students academically. This further substantiates data presented in Chapter II regarding research conducted by Susanna Loeb at Stanford University and at the University of California who sampled 14,000 kindergarteners from the National Center for Education and found cognitive gains in children who took part in a structured developmental program (Loeb, 1995). The benefits of participation in a structured pre-literacy program provide for students an early intervention that produces not only short-term benefits, but also ones that will benefit him/her their entire life. These findings are

also echoed in the research of Garces et al. (2000), who also support the implementation of such programs and as suggested in Chapter II, these findings should assist policymakers in providing such programs.

The findings from this study also substantiate the work of Meece and Daniels (2007), whose work has identified early childhood education as a developmentally dynamic component vital to a child's academic success. Key to this research is the fact that the researcher was able to support a hypothesis that structure is vital and that much like the work of Meece and Miller (1997) cannot be left unaddressed.

In Chapter II, an overview of Early Childhood Interventions in large scale Early Childhood Longitudinal Study were presented, however those studies mostly focused on children who were older. Although, that research was able to establish the long-term benefits of early interventions; they did not examine whether structure and/or curricular programs assisted with those benefits. It was this researcher's examination of available data that allowed her to add to their perspectives. Their claims that children who are disadvantaged arrive at school less prepared and thus widen the gap as they attend school, were supported by this study. Unfortunately, this study was limited in that it could not examine the suppositions of Weikart (1996), who claimed that these students have significant drawbacks such as, dropping out of school, unemployment, consistent crime, welfare assistance and delinquency.

As stated in Chapter II by Samuel Miller (2005), this study also provides data that corroborates the theory that children do learn exponentially more at an early age. At the same time, these young children develop their self-confidence; exhibit a language repertoire, more creativity, and a longer attention span (Blaustein, 2005). Once again,

regarding this study and the research literature where Barnett and Ackerman's (2006) review of the various studies determines that the Early Childhood Education is a worthwhile investment and must be taken seriously. Fifteen of the studies that Barnett examined focused on programs with children ages 0 to 6 years old and 13 studies included three- and four-year olds who were enrolled in Head Start or public school programs. Of these studies, much like this study, findings reflected positive outcomes in student IQ and achievement test scores.

There has been a long history and attention given to early childhood in this country as documented by Maris Vinovskis, however it has been somewhat undefined with respects to specific goals. It is only recently, where research from the likes of Landry (2005) and Hinkle (2000) that early childhood programs have been seen as more than simply daycare centers for the economically disadvantaged and accepted as a means to target school readiness. As noted in Chapter II, during the 1940s the trend was that 87% of children were in the custodial care of a stay at home parent who provided full time child care (Mitchell, 2001). It was also noted that in the United States this is no longer the trend; since children less than 6 years old are cared for by someone other than the biological parents and oftentimes requires non-parental childcare (Hernandez, 1995). The findings from this study corroborate Hernandez' suppositions regarding demographic shifts and how they impact not only child-care programs, but school-readiness programs. It is this researcher's contention that much like Heymann et al. (2006) noted; it is extremely disheartening that policymakers and the business sector have not addressed this shift in demographics.

As noted in the review of literature, there is an increasing urgency for high-quality pre-kindergarten education programs among our top policy legislators and governors in the United States. This study along with research presented in Chapter II confirmed that the early years in a child's life are some of the most important to brain and learning and/or cognitive development. Policymakers are also examining outcome research for students who participated in an early educational and/or intervention programs and the benefits derived from such programs. As supported by this study, pre-kindergarten and/or early educational program serve as an investment and data supports the fact the children are more successful in life, gaps are closed for minorities, and society benefits greatly when children participate in such programs (Garces et al., 2000).

In fact studies such as the aforementioned studies, Schweinhart et al.'s (1993) study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27, Investing in our Children: What We Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions, (Karloly et al., 1998), "Extended Early Childhood Intervention and School Achievement: Age Thirteen Findings from the Chicago Longitudinal Study" (Reynolds & Temple, 1998), and other studies of the same caliber all corroborated the premise that such programs are beneficial. These studies, conducted in the 1990's, however are somewhat dated and due to new accountability factors truly would benefit from further research. The research data that documented in these studies and/or reports corroborate the fact that early childhood programs in the long run are beneficial.

One of the educational scholars and scribes noted in Chapter II, Charles Kolb, in his examination of the need to invest in a quality pre-kindergarten program elaborated on how policymakers and the business sector now recognize that too many individuals enter

the workforce without the ability to function even at a most rudimentary level and that a quality educational program; one that includes a structured pre-kindergarten program is an investment in correcting this trend (Kolb, 2007). Given that the findings from this researcher's study and the review of literature (Temple et al., 2000), it only stands to reason that an examination of good-quality early childhood intervention programs and their correlation between such programs and high school would be beneficial.

One of the other elements identified in Chapter II and substantiated by the data is the premise that students who are socio-economically disadvantaged benefit from a structured program. Findings from this study clearly support the fact, that at least for this region, a structured pre-literacy program does benefit students. The curriculum utilized in this study by the experimental group provided students with direction as to their acquisition of pre-literacy skills. In this case, students participating in the study also happened to be socio-economically disadvantaged and as such support the review of literature. Downer and Pianta (2006) had identified this as an element for consideration and the demographics for this study supported that supposition. Clearly the role played by early education has changed as the family dynamic has shifted. Utilizing current data, teachers have taken the responsibility of teaching their pre-kindergarten children with the expectation of parental support and reinforcement at home, yet as noted in Chapter II, many understand that teachers must go it alone.

Regarding this study and Literacy Building, research reflects that infants start learning in the first few months of their birth and not on the first day they register for Kindergarten or first grade (Kuhl, 2002). One of the primary factors and/or elements that were supported by this study is the fact that a child's brain is forming connections at

a furious pace early in life (Miller, 2005). As put forth in the review of literature brain activity/development continues forming connections until the onset of puberty. Clearly tied in with the findings from this study is that early intervention is crucial to early success. Research examined in Chapter II clearly confirmed how the brain responds to new information as if it were a new language. Tied in with the findings in this study and the support for the implementation of a structured pre-literacy program can only substantiate how children learn best (Kuhl, 2002).

As examined in this study, one of the major components that is crucial to a child's development and is fostered by a structured pre-kindergarten program is the development of language and literacy. Chapter II clearly demonstrated how in the past, teachers and parents viewed reading and writing as two separate cognitive processes (Brostrom, 2006). A review of literature provided this researcher with the understanding that the literacy process usually involved a formal instruction in the process of reading and once the skills were acquired, students should then be exposed to a variety of text (Brostrom, 2006). By examining this statement, the researcher correlated that premise with the TPRI/Tejas Lee diagnostic assessment to measure student literacy skills. In terms of literacy, research and current practices it was the researcher's contention that pre-kindergarten programs do address letter and word recognition, beginning and ending sounds, vocabulary, and comprehension (Magnuson et al., 2004). The current utilization of the TPRI and Tejas Lee was utilized in this study to examine descriptive data on the subject.

One of the major issues tied in to this study and the review of literature was the consideration of what is provided for children in pre-kindergarten programs. Currently,

based on research, programs tend to reflect current No Child Left Behind accountability trends (Stipek, 2006). With less than half of the states participating in pre-kindergarten programs it would be extremely difficult for many educators to implement a structured program (Neuman & Roskos, 2005).

One of the major issues that arose from research and the implementation of this study was that there still existed a shortage as to structured programs. As explained in Chapter II, as of 2002, forty states have some type of state and/or federal funded pre-kindergarten program targeted for the at-risk children who come from low socio-economic status. There has also been an increase in enrollment from 2001 (Beatty, 2004). But are these programs structured and do they provide a specific instructional/educational plan? While it is true that most states offer pre-kindergarten programs and are expanding to include three and four-year old children, the dilemma regarding programs such as these is preparing for implementation and any projected growth. As corroborated in Chapter II, educators must ensure that a component for improving capacity is built into the program; one that addresses growth in the early childhood programs, highly qualified staff, facilities, and resources, etc. (Mitchell, 2001).

As noted in Chapter II, regarding head-start and/or pre-kindergarten programs is that they tend to overextend themselves and often duplicate services already provided by the government. Research examined in Chapter II made reference to the fact that oftentimes instructional and/or school readiness program also provide medical and other social services programs and that may interfere with the instructional focus of the program (Greene, 2006). This was one area, where this researcher's study was

somewhat affected by a comprehensive program were students were provide extra services. Although these were not measured by this studied, data would be available for further research. It is an important component that should be examined by policymakers as this can assist them in making decisions regarding true student needs and funding. If this practice is adopted, early education programs can become more universal and will no longer carry the connotation that they are a program solely for the socio-economically deprived.

Socio-economics is a major component that impacts the implementation of early childhood intervention programs and was an element that this researcher examined in Chapter II. Although it was recognized by this researcher that many more children are entering Kindergarten better prepared; many students, especially those affected by socio-environmental factors are not school ready upon entering Kindergarten (Downer & Pianta, 2006). A key factor that determines whether children with barriers succeed not only academically , but in life is reliant on whether school districts view those barriers as challenges to overcome or whether they use them as excuses for failure (Blankstein & Noguera, 2004). As stated in this chapter, this researcher understood that the role played by early education has changed much as the family dynamic has. This researcher also understood that oftentimes educators when examining and contending with issues that impact a child's academic success tend to make generalizations regarding certain demographics. This item was examined in Chapter II and clarified by Pedro Noguera (2004). He spoke of some generalizations that exist including the traditional belief that the Hispanic household is an extended, tightly knit unit (as espoused by Reggie White) is no longer true. It is for that reason that educators need to examine the role of a pre-

kindergarten/Head Start program and their goals. In fact, much of what has been absent in this examination of school readiness is the connection between the role of educational institutions and immigrant populations (Noguera, 2004). This study clearly provides some data that supports the fact that Hispanic students when provided with a structured pre-literacy program fare better than those who do not participate.

As examined in Chapter II, research has clearly substantiated that children who face socio-economic barriers are more likely to enter the educational system with limited academic skills and often those limitations multiply never allowing these children to catch up (Magnuson et al., 2004). If these children are to be successful, it is truly important for policymakers and educators to ensure that these children are not marginalized and that the generalizations Dr. Noguera spoke about do not continue. We cannot operate under the assumption that school programs are merely “child savers” that rescue children from homes that are economically and culturally deprived (Karoly et al., 1998). The existing paradigm that labels impoverished children as a setback to the country’s educational system has to truly utilize studies such as this one that correlates early intervention with academic success.

For Hispanic children, which were the focus of this study, it is even more important to accept the challenges that these children face without making excuses for their lack performance. It is imperative that we examine their situation from all perspectives with the understanding that numerous variables exists which affect their educational opportunities (Valenzuela, 2002).

One of the assumptions that were examined in the review of literature focused on the work of Angela Valenzuela. In the following quote, the assumptions are illustrated.

At the macro level, research conducted by Orfield (1992) and Chapa and Valencia (1993) shows that immigration patterns have combined with poverty, frustrated desegregation efforts, and systemic educational neglect to give U.S. Mexicans the unfortunate distinction of being the most segregated ethnic/racial group in our nation's schools: "Hispanic students attending schools in California and Texas experience greater segregation than Blacks in Alabama and Mississippi." (as cited in Valenzuela, 2002, p. 3)

Those sentiments, when examined and/or correlated with this study, exemplify what prescriptive data and the provisions of a structured program can do for Hispanic children.

Some of the items that were revealed not only by this study, but simply via the selection of the sample were the verification that the Hispanic population has grown. The Hispanic population that utilized in the study conducted verified that this demographic is no longer a minority, but a majority. When tied in to the research provided in Chapter II and the rapid growth of the Hispanic population as examined; it is a variable to be considered. As noted in the review of literature,

... Consistent with these factors, the Hispanic share of the nation's youngest children is considerably larger than their share of the population as a whole. For example, an analysis commissioned by the Task Force of the demographics of children in 2000 found that, among the 33.4 million children ages 0-8 in the United States, 6.8 million were Hispanic—20% of the total (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7). Moreover, the Hispanic share of the 0-8 age group is projected to reach 26% as early as 2030 (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7). Consistent with this projection, 23% of the 4.1 million babies born in the United States in 2004 had Hispanic mothers, up from 21% in 2000. (as cited in the report of the National Task Force on the Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 7)

One of the major findings in this study and supported by the review of literature was the fact that developmentally appropriate practices, with respects to early childhood programs must be implemented. As this study clarified, educational structure empowers

students and allows them to develop literacy skills they would not have developed on their own. Chapter II indicated that the three dimensions for developmentally appropriate practices exist: age, individual and cultural appropriateness. These dimensions can and would be addressed by providing a structured pre-literacy program. Regarding age, as illustrated in Chapter II, there is a growth sequence that occurs the first 9 years of their life. Educators as the research indicated, must prepare the learning environment as well as the appropriate experiences in all domains of development which are physical, cognitive, social, and emotional (NAEYC, 2005). In addition to these age appropriate structures, educators as research indicated must also establish individual patterns of learning as well as growth differences taking into consideration personality, family background and learning style (NAEYC, 2005). The final element, that of cultural appropriateness, according to the NAEYC (2005), social and cultural contexts must be established within meaningful learning experiences.

As indicated in Chapter II, there is much debate concerning how to teach young children in order to ensure their development and learning. It is beneficial to have discussions and conversations among our teaching professionals including professional development to increase in their knowledge base and expertise (NAEYC, 1997).

This study, via the validation of the researcher's hypothesis supported the assertion in the review of literature that young children construct their own understanding of learning through the structure of their daily experiences at home, at preschool, and in the community. If provided with greater educational experiences, then clearly, students would encounter more academic success. The research also indicated that the active participation with other children, siblings, adults and others contribute to a

child's learning development. Children are constantly learning as they communicate, observe, manipulate, and reflect on their experiences. By providing a structured program, teachers would enhance intelligence through the constructivist model where children would be allowed to utilize manipulatives, rotate among centers to promote interaction, field trips and other experiences which also promote socialization (Huitt & Hummel, 2003).

Two major educational psychologists/behaviorists were identified in Chapter II and their theories and ideals clearly were validated in this study. Both Vygotsky and Piaget professed the notion that connections between children and the cultural context provides shared interactions and experiences. Experiences that fostered in a structured environment allowed children to flourish. We must make structural changes where children will be provided with opportunities to excel intellectually and socially (Hausfather, 1996). Vygotsky challenges the pedagogy utilized in classrooms where teachers lecture and students memorize with the only expectation of reciting it back to the teacher. A structured pre-literacy program that promotes a constructivist theory as articulated by Piaget would direct students to greater success. There are three assumptions that are recommended in these guidelines: 1) the children are viewed as scientists, 2) learning occurs in a creative, constructivist manner; and 3) Knowledge and skills provide the basis for each of the content area (Maxwell, 1996).

In relation to language acquisition as presented in Chapter II, infants in the first year of life acquire a great deal of language even before they are able to speak. The research makes a correlation between learning language and the ability to read. This study supports the notion that via a structured program, schools can build upon early

language development and ensure school readiness. As noted in Chapter II, numerous studies have been conducted that map the patterns of language as infants develop the brain. At 6 months the development consists of consonants and vowels and at 9 months the patterns of words. Infants store millions of information just by listening to us conversing.

The present study is focused on the impact of academic performance of pre-kindergarten students after participating in a three year structured literacy program. Based on the review of literature the data confirmed the hypothesis that young Hispanic children, who were given the opportunity to attend a three-year old structured literacy program, acquired literacy skills and performed academically above those students who did not participate in the program.

Current assessment tools utilized to examine the acquisition and development of pre-literacy skills (TPRI and Tejas Lee) which identify prescriptive instruction for students. It is also vital to continue the examination not only of those instruments, but also the correlation between Hispanic and/or economically disadvantaged children (Valenzuela, 2002).

Given the fact that this trend provides educators with an opportunity to provide a more prescriptive and structured literacy program should prove authentic. An essential component of this structured program is not only the use of timely and accurate data, but also the utilization of highly qualified and competent staff. With regard to this study and current practices, prior and current research supports the need for further research. In addition to the examination of pre-kindergarten students who participate in a structured pre-literacy program, it is essential to review literature on policy and investment in pre-

kindergarten programs, theories of early intervention, literacy building, a perspective of early childhood programs, pre-kindergarten and socio-economic factors, pre-kindergarten and barriers for Hispanic children, developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood programs, and language acquisition. As Dr. Pedro Noguera states, “Education remains the best hope for the poor and the powerless, and one of the few means of reducing the profound disparities in wealth and opportunity that characterize American society” (Reed et al., 2004, p. 3). With respects to that edict, this review of current literature and practices, it only stands to reason that a structured pre-kindergarten literacy program will not only improve school readiness, but also provide the hope and promise for all those children in our society.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher has identified three key areas that would benefit from greater research. Developmentally speaking, especially in regards to cognitive and pre-literacy skills, an early intervention program or pre-kindergarten program can provide children with a school readiness vehicle that can insure future success. However, the scope of this study only examined results at the kindergarten grade level. With today’s accountability mandates, stakeholders would benefit from an examination, perhaps a longitudinal study of future student results. Would Hispanic students who participated in a structured pre-literacy program extend their success past the kindergarten grade level? Can we as a society belittle the importance of an early intervention pre-kindergarten program for three- and four-year old children whose participation will increase their cognitive, physical, and social

development as substantiated in the review of literature? (Saskatchewan Education, 1997). Both Loraine Thompson Information Services and Hinkle in Chapter II espoused the benefits (an increase in children's I.Q. scores, less special education placements, and a focus on nutrition and health (Hinkle, 2000; Saskatchewan Education, 1997).

Another area for consideration regarding further research extends to the examination of Hispanics and/or other demographic groups in other regions. In Chapter II, Kuhl (2002) noted how developmentally children can manipulate a variety of languages and sounds. How would students influenced by other languages or other geographic elements benefit from a structured program? Given that a variety of dialects and regional colloquialisms exist even within this small region, greater research would provide more insight into the language variable. This is especially important with the growth of the Hispanic population in this country. Research in this area would not only provide direction for early childhood program, but also bilingual programs.

A third element for further research would be the examination of assessment instruments that would also provide perhaps more substantial data and improve fidelity. Research that would use assessment instruments other than the Texas Primary Reading Inventory and/or the Tejas Lee may provide other perspectives not considered. It would also be more beneficial to gather more data including gender, use of alternate resources, teacher preparation and/ or regional data thorough pre-test and post-test data for each group; specific to academic content. It would also stand to reason that further examination, regarding the comparative results of implementation in a rural setting versus an urban setting, would be beneficial. This study utilized the Texas Primary Reading Inventory and the Tejas Lee its Spanish Language counterpart, while these

instruments assessed Graphophonemic Knowledge, Phonemic Awareness, and Comprehension, there is no doubt that we must examine pre-literacy skills in addition to other perspectives.

While a single case study cannot provide a sole basis for the practice of leadership, this study would suggest that there exist various elements that bear consideration for implementation. The first tied to this descriptive study suggests a need for further exploration of teachers' understanding of literacy and effective reading instruction. Clearly staff development regarding those elements along with developmental instructional practices would fortify if not duplicate similar results in other regions. Given that under current accountability mandates, we are asked to provide highly qualified staff, we clearly would benefit from having that staff at the foundation level. Angela Valenzuela and other champions against "subtractive schooling," would support the push for better prepared teachers.

The second area for consideration regarding practice, would be the implementation of a comprehensive early childhood system that utilizes students data, has concise and well defined goals, and is fully funded by the government. This would provide universal pre-kindergarten programs to the economically disadvantaged student which in turn increases the educational playing field rather than limiting the scope to a merely childcare facility. Recommendations for revision regarding factors specifically tied to socio-economics affecting student success, the possibility of implementing similar programs in other geographic regions and with other demographics, environmental factors, comparisons to other structured pre-literacy programs, the longitudinal impact of such a program and a need for further study is substantiated from

the administration of this study. Additional procedural practices, better ways of employing student data, providing a structured pre-literacy program at all campuses, and increased participation by other campuses could provide additional data.

The final, and perhaps more vital element that must be supported, is the inclusion of the parent. This is not an endeavor that can be undertaken alone. In order for those pre-literacy skills that are taught in the school, it is essential that they are also reinforced in the home. Parents must be included and involved in training that allows them to nurture student progress in the home environment. The hard part to this initiative is going to be the accountability. No doubt many parents will refuse to participate and/or will find excuses to avoid said participation. For that reason, it is this researcher's recommendation that leadership use a combination of strategies to attract parents by providing citizen classes, GED, learning the English language, technology classes, sessions on parenting skills, parent volunteers, parents on patrol, coaching duties, cooking, sponsor for dancing classes, chess club sponsors, tutors for after school tutorials, etc.

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APPENDIX A**LISD RESEARCH AGREEMENT**

GUIDELINES

- If my request to conduct research as presented in my Research Study Request is granted, I agree to abide by the Guidelines for Research in LISD as stated. I understand that I am requesting assistance in a research project and I am not requesting information pursuant to the Texas Open Records Act.

Please indicate affiliation by placing a check below:

☒ District Employee ☐ Non-District Personnel

Alfonso S. Quera 4/2/07

Signature Date

District Research Review Committee Recommendation:

☒ Approved ☐ Not Approved

Date of Review: April 11, 2007

Research Review Committee Chair Signature _____ Date _____

Supervisor's Recommendation (if District Employee) _____ Date _____

If approved, the requestor shall submit a copy of this agreement and the Research Study Request to the principal or department head when requesting participation.

APPENDIX B

LISD ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS



Administrative Regulation for Review and Approval of All Research Requests

Objective:

The objective of this policy is to establish and adhere to policies and procedures regarding the review and approval of all research requests in the Laredo Independent School District.

General Guidelines:

1. Each principal and department head shall ensure that all employees and student investigators who wish to gather data for research must receive approval from the District Research Review Committee.
2. Research is generally to be a critical investigation or experimentation based upon a hypothesis and includes data collection from or about LISD students or staff. Research may include strategies such as the use of a survey, a questionnaire and/or the examination of student data. The District must be aware of and abide by the legal restrictions regarding student confidentiality, law such as FERPA and employee confidentiality laws such as 20 U.S.C. SS 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99.
3. The District Research Review Committee will be comprised of Executive Director for Human Resources, Chief Financial Officer, and the Superintendent's Designee. The Executive Director for Human Resources shall act as the chair of the committee and will coordinate the review process. The Superintendent shall provide final written approval.

Responsibilities:

1. All Individuals, whether District employees or non-District personnel, who wish to conduct research in the District shall complete the following forms: 1) Research Study Request, 2) Research Agreement, and 3) Research Endorsement for Non-District Personnel.
2. The Executive Director for Human Resources will coordinate the review process through the review committee. Requests will be received by the first of every month.

3. The Executive Director for Human Resources shall forward to the Superintendent all research requests which have been reviewed and approved by the committee.
4. The Executive Director for Human resources shall note the approval/disapproval by the committee on the Research Agreement Form, sign the form, and send a copy of the form to the requestor.
5. When requesting participation by campuses or departments, each person who receives approval to conduct the research shall present a copy of the Research Agreement to the principal/department head.
6. Participation must be voluntary by employees and must not interfere with the instructional day.
7. Collection of data must be provided to participant(s) and District Research Committee Chair.
8. The research shall not unduly interfere with the investigator's daily operational schedule.
9. For student-related research or study the investigator shall sign the LISD form conforming to FERPA standards. Failure to comply with law may result in further disciplinary action, including termination of employment.
10. Employee/Investigator warrants the following: Adherence to applicable federal, state and local laws related to access to property, employees, parents, students, and civil rights while conducting the research on LISD property.
11. The Superintendent may approve or disapprove the recommendation.
12. The requester shall submit forms and all support materials to the following office:

Executive Director for Human Resources
 Laredo Independent School District
 1702 Houston St.
 Laredo, Texas 78040

Approved: _____

Date Apr. 11, 2007

Attachments: Research Study Request Form
 Research Agreement Form
 Research Endorsement for Non-District Personnel

References: Board Policy EF (Legal); FL (Legal); GBA (Legal)

At the conclusion of your research, who will you report your findings?
Teachers, parents, and the School Board of Trustees

Do any of the procedures or equipment to be used constitute an emotional or physical hazard to subjects? If yes, explain.
No

Ultimate purpose of research study (publication in journal, thesis, dissertation, etc.):
Dissertation

APPENDIX C

LISD RESEARCH ENDORSEMENT



RESEARCH ENDORSEMENT FOR NON-DISTRICT PERSONNEL

1. To be completed by the person requesting approval to conduct research in LISD.

I, Veronica F. Guerra, do hereby agree that I will abide by the Policies, Rules and Regulations and the Administrative Regulations of the Laredo Independent School District and will furnish a copy of the report describing the findings of the study to the Executive Director for Human Resources, Laredo Independent School District.

Veronica F. Guerra 4/2/07
 Signature Date

2. To be completed by the requestor's professor, the chairperson of an advisory committee, or other professional personal sponsoring the research.

I am familiar with the proposed study and judge that the researcher submitting this proposal is professional qualified to undertake this investigation. Further, the research design is valid and appropriate.

 Signature of Sponsoring Professional Date

Position or Title: See Attached Approval

Name of Department and Institution or Organization: _____

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST MEMORANDUM



1702 Houston • Laredo, Texas 78040 • 956 795-3215
Fax 956 795-3205 • email: eguajardo@laredoisd.org

Verónica F. Guerra
Interim Superintendent

Ernesto Guajardo
Interim Executive
Director for Human
Resources

Board of Trustees

John Peter Montalvo
President, District 3

Jesus Justo Guerra
Vice President, District 7

Guillermina Montes
Secretary, District 6

Jorge L. Rodriguez
Treasurer, District 2

Jose A Valdez
Trustee, District 1

George M. Beckelhymer
Trustee, District 4

Daniel Rigal
Trustee, District 5

TO: Alvaro Perez, Interim Chief Financial Officer

FROM: Ernesto Guajardo, Interim Executive Director for Human Resources

RE: Research Study / Veronica F. Guerra

DATE: April 5, 2007

Enclosed is a copy of a research study request received in Human Resources for approval of the committee. The committee consists of the Chief Financial Officer, Executive Director for HR and the person that the superintendent designates. The designee for this request is Severita Sanchez, Executive Director/Academic Compliance and Accountability.

Please review the research agreement and advise if this request can be granted to proceed with the process. Thank you.

Enclosure: request

APPENDIX E

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST EXAMPLE



Request No. _____

RESEARCH STUDY REQUEST

Name: Veronica F. Guerra Date: 4/2/2007
 Address: 613 St. James Fax: 795-3405
 E-mail Address: vfguerra@laredoisd.org Telephone: 795-3410

Indicate the number of schools involved:

Elementary Schools 14 Middle Schools _____ High Schools _____

Study Title:
 The Difference in Academic Performance between Hispanic Pre-Kindergarten Students in a Structured Literacy Program Compared to Academic Performance of Hispanic Pre-kindergarten Students not in the Structured Literacy Program in Selected Elementary Schools in Laredo, Texas

Proposal Abstract:
 As part of my doctoral degree requirements, I am going to find the differences in Academic performance between Hispanic pre-kindergarten students in a Structured literacy program compared to academic performance of Hispanic pre-Kindergarten students not in the structured literacy program in selected elementary schools in Laredo, Texas.

Describe the District population, the data to be collected, the timeline, including the number of professionals, students, and schools.
 220 students who are three year old from selected campuses in Laredo, Texas will be randomly selected during April 2007 through June 2007.

APPENDIX F**LETTER REQUESTING LISD RESEARCH PERMISSION**

March 26, 2007

Dear Board President:

Mr. John Peter Montalvo

I am presently a post - graduate student at Texas A&M University seeking to complete the requirements for a Doctorate Degree with a major in Educational Administration. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for this degree, I am conducting research and completing a study on "The Differences in Academic Performance between Hispanic Pre-Kindergarten Students in a Structured Literacy Program compared to Academic Performance of Hispanic Pre-Kindergarten Students not in the Structured Literacy Program in Selected Elementary Schools". The purpose of this study is to examine the benefits or detriments of a structured literacy program for Hispanic pre-K students. I am requesting permission to examine LISD student data and agree to adhere to any and all confidentiality rules as prescribed by the district and FERPA.

The data collected for this study will be used for educational and publication purposes; however, the participants' names will not be revealed at any time. Information from this project will be kept under lock and key under my supervision. This study is expected to assist in determining whether any practices need to be modified to insure student success.

I would appreciate your support in allowing me to conduct this research study at LISD. By signing below, you grant me permission to conduct this study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, Veronica F. Guerra, principal investigator, at 645-8309 (home) or 795-3410 (work).

John Peter Montalvo 4-5-2007
Signature of Board President Date

Veronica F. Guerra 4/2/07
Signature of Principal Investigator Date

APPENDIX G

NON-PARTICIPANTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

KINDER 2006

Campus	Student Identification	TPRI 2006	Tejas Lee 2006	Graphophonic Knowledge	Phonological Awareness	Comprehension	Attendance	Math Grades	Science Grade	Social Studies Grade	English Oral Language Grade	Spanish Oral Language Grade
Kawas	20001001		x	SD	D	SD	165	P	S	S	S	S
Kawas	20001002		x	SD	SD	SD	170	S	S	S	S	S
Kawas	20001003		x	D	SD	SD	172	S	S	P	NI	S
Kawas	20001004		x	SD	D	SD	172	S	S	S	P	S
Kawas	20001005		x	SD	D	SD	155	S	S	S	P	S
Kawas	20001006		x	SD	D	SD	165	S	S	S	S	S
Kawas	20001007		x	SD	SD	SD	170	P	S	S	S	S
Tarver	20001008		x	SD	D	SD	173	P	S	S	P	P
Tarver	20001009		x	SD	SD	SD	120	P	P	P	P	P
Tarver	200010010		x	SD	D	SD	170	P	S	S	P	P
Ligarde	200010011		x	SD	D	SD	170	S	S	S	S	P
Ligarde	200010012		x	SD	D	SD	174	P	S	S	S	NI
Ligarde	200010013		x	SD	D	SD	172	S	S	S	S	S
Ligarde	200010014		x	SD	SD	SD	171	NI	P	P	S	NI
Macdonell	200010015		x	SD	SD	SD	160	P	S	S	S	S
Macdonell	200010016		x	SD	SD	SD	174	NI	S	S	P	P
Macdonell	200010017		x	D	SD	SD	174	P	S	S	P	S
Macdonell	200010018		x	SD	D	SD	168	P	S	S	P	P
Macdonell	200010019		x	SD	SD	SD	147	S	S	S	P	P
Macdonell	200010020		x	SD	SD	SD	161	S	S	S	P	S
Farias	200010021		x	D	SD	SD	173	S	S	S	P	P
Farias	200010022		x	SD	SD	SD	172	P	S	S	P	S
Farias	200010023		x	SD	SD	SD	171	P	S	NI	P	P
Farias	200010024		x	SD	D	SD	172	S	S	S	P	P
Farias	200010025		x	SD	SD	SD	155	NI	P	S	NI	NI
Ryan	200010026		x	SD	D	SD	117	S	S	S	S	S
Ryan	200010027		x	SD	D	SD	159	S	S	S	S	S
Ryan	200010028		x	SD	D	SD	168	S	S	S	S	S
Ryan	200010029		x	SD	D	SD	144	P	P	P	S	S
Ryan	200010030		x	SD	SD	SD	150	S	S	S	S	S
Santa Maria	200010031		x	SD	SD	SD	155	S	S	S	P	S
Santa Maria	200010032		x	SD	SD	SD	169	P	P	S	S	S
Santa Maria	200010033		x	SD	SD	SD	153	S	S	S	S	P
Santa Maria	200010034		x	SD	D	SD	160	S	S	S	P	P
Sto. Nino	200010035		x	SD	SD	SD	169	S	P	P	S	P
Sto. Nino	200010036		x	SD	D	SD	167	S	P	NI	S	P
Sto. Nino	200010037		x	SD	SD	SD	143	S	P	NI	P	P
Sto. Nino	200010038		x	SD	D	SD	172	S	S	P	P	S

Campus	Student Identification	TPRI 2006	Tejas Lee 2006	Graphophonemic Knowledge	Phonological Awareness	Comprehension	Attendance	Math Grades	Science Grade	Social Studies Grade	English Oral Language Grade	Spanish Oral Language Grade
Sto. Nino	200010039		x	SD	D	SD	175	S	S	S	P	S
Sto. Nino	200010040		x	SD	D	SD	166	S	S	S	P	S
Sto. Nino	200010041		x	SD	D	SD	171	S	P	P	P	P
Sto. Nino	200010042		x	SD	D	SD	155	S	P	P	P	P
Sto. Nino	200010043		x	SD	SD	SD	174	S	P	P	P	P
Sto. Nino	200010044		x	SD	D	SD	151	S	P	P	S	P
Sto. Nino	200010045		x	SD	D	SD	167	P	P	S	P	S
Sto. Nino	200010046		x	SD	D	SD	158	S	S	S	S	S
Sto. Nino	200010047		x	SD	D	SD	168	S	S	S	S	S
Sto. Nino	200010048		x	SD	D	SD	164	P	S	S	S	S
Sto. Nino	200010049		x	SD	SD	SD	169	S	S	S	S	S
Sto. Nino	200010050		x	SD	D	SD	172	S	S	S	S	S
Sto. Nino	200010051		x	SD	SD	SD	163	S	S	S	S	S
Sto. Nino	200010052		x	SD	D	SD	168	S	S	S	S	S
Sto. Nino	200010053		x	SD	D	SD	168	S	S	S	S	S
Sto. Nino	200010054		x	SD	D	SD	171	S	S	S	P	S
Sto. Nino	200010055		x	SD	D	SD	162	P	S	P	P	P
Sto. Nino	200010056		x	SD	SD	SD	168	P	P	S	P	P
Sto. Nino	200010057		x	SD	D	SD	167	P	S	S	P	S
Sto. Nino	200010058		x	SD	D	SD	169	S	P	P	S	P
Sto. Nino	200010059		x	SD	D	SD	163	S	S	S	P	S
Sto. Nino	200010060		x	SD	D	SD	155	P	P	P	S	P
Sto. Nino	200010061		x	SD	D	SD	165	S	S	S	S	S
Heights	200010062		x	SD	D	SD	172	S	S	S	P	S
Heights	200010063		x	SD	SD	SD	168	S	S	S	S	S
Heights	200010064		x	SD	SD	SD	171	S	S	S	P	S
JC Martin	200010065		x	SD	SD	SD	174	S	S	S	S	S
JC Martin	200010066		x	SD	D	SD	146	S	S	S	S	S
JC Martin	200010067		x	SD	D	SD	158	S	S	S	S	S
JC Martin	200010068		x	SD	SD	SD	164	S	S	S	P	S
JC Martin	200010069		x	SD	SD	SD	68	S	S	S	S	S
JC Martin	200010070		x	SD	SD	SD	89	S	S	S	P	S
JC Martin	200010071		x	SD	SD	SD	153	S	S	S	S	S
JC Martin	200010072		x	SD	SD	SD	151	S	S	S	S	S
JC Martin	200010073		x	SD	D	SD	168	NI	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010074		x	SD	D	SD	175	NI	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010075		x	SD	D	SD	168	P	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010076		x	SD	D	SD	150	P	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010077		x	SD	SD	SD	122	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010078		x	SD	SD	SD	167	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010079		x	SD	SD	SD	161	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010080		x	SD	D	SD	169	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010081		x	SD	SD	SD	166	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010082		x	SD	SD	SD	171	S	S	S	S	S

Campus	Student Identification	TPRI 2006	Tejas Lee 2006	Graphophonemic Knowledge	Phonological Awareness	Comprehension	Attendance	Math Grades	Science Grade	Social Studies Grade	English Oral Language Grade	Spanish Oral Language Grade
Zachry	200010083		x	SD	SD	SD	162	P	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010084		x	SD	SD	SD	166	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010085		x	SD	SD	SD	174	P	S	S	P	P
Zachry	200010086		x	SD	SD	SD	171	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	200010087		x	SD	SD	SD	171	S	S	S	P	P
Zachry	200010088		x	SD	SD	SD	136	P	S	S	P	S
Sanchez Ochoa	200010089		x	SD	SD	SD	174	S	P	S	P	P
Sanchez Ochoa	200010090		x	SD	SD	SD	171	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	200010091		x	SD	D	SD	175	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	200010092		x	SD	D	SD	149	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	200010093		x	SD	D	SD	175	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	200010094		x	SD	SD	SD	156	P	S	S	P	S
Sanchez Ochoa	200010095		x	SD	D	SD	174	S	S	S	P	S
Sanchez Ochoa	200010096		x	D	SD	SD	175	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	200010097		x	SD	SD	SD	173	P	S	S	S	P
Sanchez Ochoa	200010098		x	SD	D	SD	174	S	S	P	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	200010099		x	SD	SD	SD	175	P	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	2000100100		x	SD	D	SD	167	P	P	P	P	P
Buenos Aires	2000100101		x	SD	SD	SD	172	S	S	S	P	S
Buenos Aires	2000100102		x	SD	SD	SD	146	P	P	P	P	P
Buenos Aires	2000100103		x	SD	D	SD	149	S	S	S	S	S
Buenos Aires	2000100104		x	D	SD	SD	171	S	S	S	P	S

LEGEND: Assessment: (D) Developing (SD) Still Developing (NI) Needs Improvement
 Grades: (S) Satisfactory (P) Progressing

APPENDIX H

PARTICIPANTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

KINDER 2006

Campus	Student Identification	TPRI 2006	Tejas Lee 2006	Graphophonic Knowledge	Phonological Awareness	Comprehension	Attendance	Math Grades	Science Grade	Social Studies Grade	English Oral Language Grade	Spanish Oral Language Grade
Kawas	10001001		X	D	D	D	165	S	S	S	S	S
Kawas	10001002		X	D	D	D	171	S	S	S	P	S
Kawas	10001003		X	D	D	SD	170	S	S	S	S	S
Kawas	10001004		X	D	D	SD	172	S	S	S	S	S
Kawas	10001005		X	SD	D	SD	172	S	S	S	S	S
Kawas	10001006	X		D	D	D	155	S	S	S	S	S
Kawas	10001007	X		D	D	D	163	S	S	S	S	S
Kawas	10001008		X	D	D	D	170	S	S	S	S	S
Kawas	10001009		X	SD	D	SD	170	S	S	S	P	S
Bruni	100010010		X	D	D	D	121	S	S	P	S	S
Bruni	100010011		X	D	D	D	176	S	S	S	S	S
Bruni	100010012		X	D	D	D	168	S	S	S	P	S
Bruni	100010013		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	S	S
Daiches	100010014	X		D	D	D	175	S	S	S	S	S
Daiches	100010015		X	D	D	D	174	S	S	S	P	S
Daiches	100010016		X	D	D	D	171	S	S	S	S	S
Daiches	100010017		X	D	D	D	166	S	S	S	S	S
Tarver	100010018		X	D	D	D	172	S	S	S	S	S
Tarver	100010019		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	S	S
Tarver	100010020		X	D	D	D	167	S	S	S	S	S
Leyendecker	100010021		X	D	D	D	162	NI	S	S	NI	S
Leyendecker	100010022	X		D	D	D	164	S	S	S	S	S
Leyendecker	100010023		X	D	D	D	161	S	S	S	S	S
Leyendecker	100010024		X	D	SD	D	132	P	P	P	P	P
Ligarde	100010025		X	D	D	D	174	S	S	S	S	P
Ligarde	100010026		X	SD	D	D	173	S	S	S	S	S
Macdonell	100010027		X	D	D	D	120	S	S	S	P	S
Macdonell	100010028		X	D	D	D	164	S	S	S	S	S
Macdonell	100010029		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	P	S
Milton	100010030	X		D	D	D	173	S	S	S	S	S
Milton	100010031	X		D	D	D	174	S	S	S	S	S
Alma Pierce	100010032		X	D	D	D	174	S	S	S	S	S
Alma Pierce	100010033		X	D	D	D	168	S	S	S	P	S
Alma Pierce	100010034		X	SD	SD	SD	170	P	P	S	S	S
Alma Pierce	100010035		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	S	S
Alma Pierce	100010036		X	D	D	D	171	S	S	S	S	S
Alma Pierce	100010037		X	D	D	D	164	S	S	S	P	S
Alma Pierce	100010038		X	D	D	D	164	S	S	S	P	S
Alma Pierce	100010039		X	D	D	D	176	S	S	S	P	S
Ryan	100010040	X		D	D	D	172	S	S	S	S	S
Ryan	100010041		X	D	D	D	174	S	S	S	S	S
Ryan	100010042		X	D	D	D	169	P	S	S	P	S

Campus	Student Identification	TPRI 2006	Tejas Lee 2006	Graphophonemic Knowledge	Phonological Awareness	Comprehension	Attendance	Math Grades	Science Grade	Social Studies Grade	English Oral Language Grade	Spanish Oral Language Grade
Sto. Nino	100010043		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	P	S
Sto. Nino	100010044		X	D	D	D	172	S	S	S	S	S
Hachar	100010045		X	SD	D	D	172	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010046		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010047		X	SD	D	D	172	P	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010048		X	D	D	D	170	S	P	S	P	P
Hachar	100010049		X	D	D	D	170	S	S	S	P	P
Hachar	100010050		X	SD	D	D	170	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010051		X	D	D	D	173	P	S	S	P	P
Hachar	100010052		X	D	D	D	172	P	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010053	X		D	SD	D	169	S	S	S	S	S
Hachar	100010054		X	D	D	D	174	P	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010055		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010056		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010057		X	D	D	D	170	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010058		X	D	D	D	171	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010059		X	D	D	D	174	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010060		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010061		X	D	D	D	171	P	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010062		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	P	S
Hachar	100010063		X	D	D	D	174	S	S	S	P	S
JC Martin	100010064		X	D	D	D	169	S	S	S	S	S
JC Martin	100010065		X	D	D	D	174	S	S	S	P	S
JC Martin	100010066		X	D	D	D	173	S	P	P	P	S
JC Martin	100010067		X	D	D	D	169	S	S	S	P	S
JC Martin	100010068		X	D	D	D	170	P	S	S	P	S
JC Martin	100010069		X	D	SD	D	170	S	S	S	P	S
JC Martin	100010070		X	D	D	D	164	S	S	S	S	S
JC Martin	100010071		X	D	D	D	168	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	100010072		X	D	D	D	174	S	S	S	P	S
Zachry	100010073		X	SD	SD	D	169	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	100010074		X	D	D	SD	170	P	S	S	S	S
Zachry	100010075		X	SD	D	D	164	P	S	S	S	S
Zachry	100010076	X		D	D	D	171	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	100010077		X	D	D	D	161	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	100010078		X	SD	SD	SD	171	S	S	S	P	P
Zachry	100010079		X	SD	SD	D	171	P	S	S	P	S
Zachry	100010080		X	D	D	D	172	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	100010081	X		D	D	D	175	S	S	S	S	S
Zachry	100010082		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010083		X	SD	D	D	174	P	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010084		X	D	D	D	174	S	S	S	P	S

Campus	Student Identification	TPRI 2006	Tejas Lee 2006	Graphophonemic Knowledge	Phonological Awareness	Comprehension	Attendance	Math Grades	Science Grade	Social Studies Grade	English Oral Language Grade	Spanish Oral Language Grade
Sanchez Ochoa	100010085	X		D	D	D	171	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010086		X	D	D	D	172	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010087		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010088		X	D	D	SD	171	P	S	S	S	P
Sanchez Ochoa	100010089	X		D	SD	D	173	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010090		X	D	D	D	170	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010091		X	SD	D	SD	173	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010092		X	SD	D	SD	174	S	S	S	P	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010093	X		D	D	D	174	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010094	X		D	D	SD	173	P	S	S	P	P
Sanchez Ochoa	100010095	X		D	D	D	176	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010096		X	D	D	D	169	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010097	X		D	D	SD	156	S	S	S	S	P
Sanchez Ochoa	100010098		X	D	D	D	173	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	100010099	X		D	D	D	174	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	1000100100		X	D	D	SD	174	S	S	S	P	S
Sanchez Ochoa	1000100101	X		D	D	D	174	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	1000100102	X		D	D	D	174	S	S	S	S	S
Sanchez Ochoa	1000100103		X	D	D	SD	173	S	S	S	S	S
Dovalina	1000100104		X	SD	D	SD	163	S	S	S	P	S

LEGEND: Assessment: (D) Developing (SD) Still Developing (NI) Needs Improvement
Grades: (S) Satisfactory (P) Progressing

VITA

VERONICA F. GUERRA
613 St. James, Laredo, Texas 78041

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

2008	Pursuing Ph.D. in Educational Administration, Texas A&M University
2004	Superintendent Certificate, Texas A&M International University
1986	Mid-Management/Administrator, Laredo State University
1986	Professional Supervisor
1978	Master of Science, Laredo State University
1974	Bachelor of Science Cum Laude, Laredo State University

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK EXPERIENCE

2006 - Present	Executive Director for Innovative Programs
2005 - 2006	Executive Director for Instructional Support Services
2004 - 2005	Executive Director for Curriculum and Instruction
2004 - 2005	Administrative Assistant for Curriculum & Instruction

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1984 - 1986	Teacher, Federal Programs
1978 - 1981	Federal Programs Oral Language Arts Teacher at H. B. Zachry Elementary
1974 - 1978	First Grade Teacher, J. C. Martin Elementary School

HONORS AND ASSOCIATIONS

- Member of Alethea Educational Club, 1994 President
- Member of LASO, Laredo Administrative and Supervisors' Association
- Member of NASSP
- Member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church
- Teacher of the Year at H. B. Zachry Elementary School, 1981
- Golden Apple Nominee, 1992
- Participated in USP Superintendent's Coalition, January 2000
- Presenter at Texas A&M International University Roundtable Discussion, Spring 2000 & 2001
- Presenter at 2000 Mid-Winter Conference, Austin, Texas
- Region One ESC Principal Assessor, 1998, 1999, 2000
- Texas Cattlewomen's Association Award, May 2007
- LULAC COUNCIL #12, 2007 Tejano Achiever Award
- Nominated for the Superintendent of the Year by the 2007-2008 Texas Computer Education Association Educator Awards